



# Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



MONDAY — 16 MAY 2022

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## Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	<b>05/15 TSA warns 'very, very busy summer'</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/life/travel/tsa-warns-of-travel-hiccups-as-it-braces-for-very-very-busy-summer/">https://www.seattletimes.com/life/travel/tsa-warns-of-travel-hiccups-as-it-braces-for-very-very-busy-summer/</a>
GIST	<p>DALLAS — The nation's TSA chief, David Pekoske, and airport and airline leaders say there will be inevitable 'hiccups' this summer as they expect the largest airport passenger crowds since the COVID-19 pandemic began.</p> <p>Labor shortages and sky-high demand have besieged the travel industry, and Pekoske said the agency is ready to deploy as many as 1,000 TSA agents and K-9 units to pain points across the country to counter potential backlogs at airport security checkpoints. The Transportation Security Administration created a position for new hires that will get them up to speed faster and to staff checkpoints better, helping experienced TSA agents with tasks that don't require certification.</p> <p>"We expect the summer to be very, very busy," said Pekoske, who was recently nominated for a second five-year term by President Joe Biden. "That's not to say that there will not be some hiccups along the way — those things will happen, but we'll do everything we can to recover quickly."</p> <p>Pekoske spoke May 10 at a meeting at Homeland Security offices in Coppell.</p> <p>Some expect airport crowds to surpass 3 million passengers a day on the busiest travel days this summer between Memorial Day and Labor Day. But the demand comes with challenges, too.</p> <p>Pilots are complaining about fatigue and flight cancellations heading into the summer at airlines including American Airlines, Southwest Airlines, Alaska and Delta.</p> <p>Airport restaurants are once again begging for employees, and there have also been shortages of workers at car rental desks, at customer service call center workers for airlines and of the people who push wheelchairs and ground employees who pull planes back and forth from gates.</p> <p>"Everybody is facing labor shortages; airlines and TSA are no different," said Paul Doell, vice president for the National Air Carrier Association. "At just about every level you can think of in the airline industry we can speak of we're having labor shortages."</p> <p>Airlines themselves are honing in on running reliable operations this summer and cutting down on the number of delays and cancellations that have sometimes plagued travelers during peak periods in the last year. That has led some, including Southwest Airlines, to cut thousands of flights from schedules. While that could help airlines run on time, it will also mean planes will be more full and pressure will be on workers in airports, including TSA agents, to get those travelers to flights on time.</p> <p>But regional air carriers, which fly about 43% of all scheduled flights in the U.S., say they are facing labor shortages as employees such as pilots are being poached by the larger airlines. That could create issues connecting smaller destinations to larger hub airports, Black said.</p> <p>"The pilot shortage is impacting the regionals, and we expect to see the small communities hit the hardest," Black said. "We expect this to continue to be a trend, but those pain points will assert themselves at hubs as well."</p>

	<p>TSA has already suffered some extraordinary long waits at airports that have seen passenger volumes surpass 2019 levels, including at Austin-Bergstrom International Airport and Orlando International Airport.</p> <p>Pekoske also warned that many travelers this summer could be getting on a plane for the first time in three years, especially as masking and COVID-19 restrictions have fallen in many parts of the country and international travel restrictions are being lifted.</p> <p>“The amount of people that worked concessions prior to the pandemic are not there now,” said Kevin Burke, head of Airports Council International-North America. “They’ve come back, but they’re nowhere near where they need to be.”</p> <p>That confluence of issues could make for a challenging summer for passengers and airline employees alike.</p> <p>“So we really ask that we try to have patience and understanding when they are dealing with employees at the airport,” Doell said. “Everybody’s trying to do the best job they can make sure this is safe, secure and also as comfortable as it can be under normal circumstances but especially when you have those tough days where you have storms that are disrupting the system.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/15 Northeast, mid-Atlantic primed for storms</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/05/15/Northeast-MidAtlantic-weather-potent-storms/2371652638092/">https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/05/15/Northeast-MidAtlantic-weather-potent-storms/2371652638092/</a>
GIST	<p>For some across the eastern United States, the end of the past week and the start of the weekend brought the first truly warm, humid and sticky conditions of the season. While this summery sneak preview will continue to help residents work up a sweat across the region, <a href="#">AccuWeather</a> meteorologists say it will also set the stage for something far more troublesome.</p> <p>After days of warm, humid air, the atmosphere is primed to set off a threat for feisty storms early this week across portions of the mid-Atlantic and Northeast.</p> <p>The same storm that is set to <a href="#">bring volatile weather to the central U.S. on Sunday</a> will shift eastward for Monday.</p> <p>"A <a href="#">cold front</a> associated with this storm will dig across the Eastern states on Monday," AccuWeather Meteorologist Rob Richards said.</p> <p>Once this front comes head-to-head with the sticky swath of air already in place, strong-to-severe thunderstorms will quickly develop and race eastward. The timing of the most potent storms will be from Monday afternoon through Monday evening, according to forecasters.</p> <p>A considerable portion of the East will need to keep an eye to the sky for rapidly changing conditions on Monday.</p> <p>Areas from northern North Carolina, through portions of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, and northward into New York and much of New England all have the potential to experience potent storms.</p> <p>"These thunderstorms will have the potential to produce a variety of hazards including torrential downpours, hail, damaging wind gusts and even isolated tornadoes," Richards cautioned.</p> <p>However, AccuWeather forecasters have pinpointed a tighter corridor where some of the most explosive storms of the day can develop.</p>

"The area of greatest risk will be from [Washington, D.C.](#), all the way up into eastern Pennsylvania and to the north of [New York City](#)," Richards said.

Major metropolitan areas like [Philadelphia](#) and [Baltimore](#), as well as population-dense cities like [Wilmington](#), Del., and [Allentown](#), Pa., fall within this area of greatest risk.

While any location within the area at risk for severe storms on Monday can experience heavy rainfall, damaging wind gusts and hail, it is within the area of greatest risk where widespread gusts of 60-70 mph are most likely to occur within storms, with an AccuWeather Local StormMax&trade of 80 mph.

Winds of this magnitude can lead to downed trees and power lines and can also cause some trouble for high-profile vehicles traveling along area roadways.

The most likely arrival time for severe thunderstorms in Washington, D.C., will be in the afternoon, while in Philadelphia storms will hold off until later in the afternoon. In New York City, the storm threat is likely to arrive by the late afternoon or early evening hours. This means that for some parts of the Interstate-95 corridor, some of the strongest storms are set to arrive right around the evening rush hour.

Following a busy weather day on Monday, Tuesday will strike a different chord entirely for much of the Northeast and portions of the mid-Atlantic.

After the cold front exits much of the area on Tuesday, cooler, less humid air and breezy conditions will filter across the Northeast in its wake.

Temperatures on Tuesday will come crashing down in places like [Binghamton](#), N.Y., and [Burlington](#), Va., where temperatures are set to soar above average on Monday.

From Tuesday and continuing through the midweek, many locations across the northeastern U.S. will experience high temperatures climbing to near average or below-average levels with significantly less humidity.

This easing of temperatures and humidity will certainly make conditions feel much more like spring again for a few days, rather than an early arrival of summer.

AccuWeather forecasters caution that this round of more comfortable weather may not be around to stay for very long as another pattern change is on the horizon. Late this week, a shift in the [jet stream](#) could bring a large upswing in temperatures back to the region once again.

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HEADLINE	05/16 Russia warns against NATO expansion
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-calls-finland-sweden-joining-nato-mistake-with-far-reaching-consequences-2022-05-16/">https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-calls-finland-sweden-joining-nato-mistake-with-far-reaching-consequences-2022-05-16/</a>
GIST	<p>LONDON, May 16 (Reuters) - Russia said on Monday that the West should have no illusions that Moscow will simply put up with the Nordic expansion of the U.S.-led NATO military alliance to include Sweden and Finland, casting the move as a mistake that would stoke military tension.</p> <p>Vladimir Putin, Russia's paramount leader since the last day of 1999, has repeatedly cited the post-Soviet enlargement of the NATO alliance eastwards towards Russia's borders as a reason for the invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>The war, though, has fomented one of the biggest changes to Europe's security architecture for decades: once unthinkable moves by Sweden and Finland, which shares a 1,300 km (800 mile) border with Russia, to join the military alliance.</p>

"They should have no illusions that we will simply put up with it - and nor should Brussels, Washington and other NATO capitals," Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov was quoted as saying by the state RIA news agency.

Ryabkov, who led talks with the United States on a doomed Russian proposal to halt NATO's eastward expansion, said the decisions by Helsinki and Stockholm to join the alliance were a mistake.

"The general level of military tension will rise, predictability in this sphere will decrease. It is a shame that common sense is being sacrificed to some phantom provision about what should be done in this unfolding situation," Ryabkov said.

Russia has given few clues about what it will do in response to the Nordic enlargement of NATO, saying merely that there would be a "military-technical response".

One of Putin's closest allies said last month that Russia could deploy nuclear weapons and hypersonic missiles in the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad if Finland and Sweden joined NATO. [read more](#)

The accession of Finland and Sweden into NATO - founded in 1949 to provide European security against the Soviet Union - would be one of the biggest strategic consequences of Russia's invasion of Ukraine to date.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said such an enlargement of NATO would not strengthen the security of Europe.

#### NORDIC NATO?

The West says NATO - an alliance of 30 countries including former Warsaw Pact republics such as Poland and Hungary as well as nuclear powers the United States, Britain and France - is purely defensive.

Moscow says NATO threatens Russia and that Washington has repeatedly ignored the Kremlin's concerns about the security of its borders in the West, the source of two devastating European invasions in 1812 and 1941.

Finland gained independence from Russia in 1917 and fought two wars against it during World War Two during which it lost territory. Sweden has not fought a war for 200 years. Foreign policy has focused on supporting democracy and nuclear disarmament.

Putin says the "special military operation" in Ukraine is necessary because the United States was using Ukraine to threaten Russia through NATO enlargement and Moscow had to defend against the persecution of Russian-speaking people.

Putin says assurances were given as the Soviet Union collapsed that the alliance would not expand eastwards towards Russia, a promise he says was a lie that humiliated Russia in its time of historic weakness.

The United States and NATO dispute that such assurances were given explicitly. Kyiv and its Western backers say the claim of persecution of Russian speakers has been exaggerated by Moscow into a pretext for an unprovoked war against a sovereign state.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/16 Ukraine: battlefield successes northeast</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-counter-attacks-russian-forces-east-2022-05-16/">https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-counter-attacks-russian-forces-east-2022-05-16/</a>
GIST	RUSKA LOZOVA, Ukraine/KYIV, May 16 (Reuters) - Ukrainian troops counter-attacking against Russian forces in the country's northeast have pushed them back from the city of Kharkiv and advanced as far as the border with Russia, Ukrainian officials said on Monday.

The developments, if confirmed, would signal a further shift in momentum in favour of Ukrainian forces nearly three months into a conflict that began when Russia sent tens of thousands of troops over the border into Ukraine on Feb. 24.

Moscow meanwhile warned of "far-reaching consequences" should Finland and Sweden go ahead with plans to join the NATO military alliance - a change in the Nordic countries' long-standing policy of neutrality brought on by concern about Russian President Vladimir Putin's wider ambitions.

Fighting was reported near Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, on Monday in what interior ministry adviser Vadym Denisenko said was "our counter-offensive".

"It can no longer be stopped...Thanks to this, we can go to the rear of the Russian group of forces," he said.

Kharkiv, lying about 30 miles (50 km) from the border with Russia, had endured weeks of heavy bombardments from Russian artillery. The Russians' routing from there follows their failure to capture the capital Kyiv in the early stages of the war.

However, thousands of people, including many civilians, have been killed across the country, towns and cities have been blasted into ruins, and more than six million people have fled their homes to seek refuge in neighbouring states in scenes not seen in Europe since the Balkan wars of the 1990s. Russia denies targeting civilians.

Ukraine's defence ministry said on Monday the 227th Battalion of the 127th Brigade of Ukraine's Territorial Defence Forces had reached the border with Russia.

"Together to victory!" it said.

Kharkiv region governor Oleh Sinegubov said the troops had restored a sign on the border.

"We thank everyone who, risking their lives, liberates Ukraine from Russian invaders," Sinegubov said.

Reuters could not immediately verify Ukraine's battlefield account and it was not clear how many troops had reached the Russian border or where.

If confirmed, it would suggest a Ukrainian counter-offensive is having increasing success in pushing back Russian forces in the northeast after Western military agencies said Moscow's offensive in two eastern provinces known as the Donbas had stalled.

Nonetheless, the governor of the Luhansk region in Donbas, Serhiy Gaidai, said the situation "remains difficult", with Russian forces trying to capture the town of Sieverodonetsk.

He said leaders of the Lugansk People's Republic, the territory in Luhansk controlled by Russian-backed separatists, declared a general mobilisation, adding it was "either fight or get shot, there is no other choice".

In the south, fighting was raging around the city of Kherson and Russian missiles struck residential areas of Mykolayiv, the presidential office in Kyiv said. Reuters was unable to verify the reports.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said on Sunday Ukraine could win the war, an outcome few military analysts predicted when Russia invaded Ukraine.

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HEADLINE	05/15 Biden: time to 'fund the police'
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/biden-police-funding/2022/05/15/id/1069988/">https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/biden-police-funding/2022/05/15/id/1069988/</a>



U.S. President Joe Biden said on Sunday that police officers must deliver both effective crime deterrence and equal justice in a message that balanced two fraught political priorities as his law-enforcement reforms have stalled.

Speaking at a memorial service at the U.S. Capitol for 563 officers who died in the line of duty over the prior year, Biden offered no new indications over how he would resolve a delay in police reform aimed at holding officers to a higher standard after high-profile killings of unarmed Black people.

Instead, he answered swirling concerns about rising street violence in an election year by saying there was no tension between reforming law enforcement and deterring crime.

"Folks, the answer is not to abandon the streets; it's not to choose between safety and equal justice," Biden said.

"And we should agree it's not to defund the police - it's to fund the police. Fund them with the resources, the training they need to protect our communities and themselves and restore trust."

The remarks came as authorities investigated the shooting of 10 people in a Black neighborhood grocery store in Buffalo, New York, as a hate crime. "We must all work together to address the hate that remains a stain on the soul of America," Biden said.

It is also just two years shy of the anniversary of George Floyd's killing in Minneapolis police custody on May 25, 2020, which inspired mass protests around the country.

Biden promised Floyd's family - and voters - that he would take action but bipartisan congressional talks on a bill stalled last year. A Democrat-backed bill named for Floyd that passed the House of Representatives in 2020 would have limited officers' use of chokeholds and held them to higher legal standards for rights violations.

"We haven't gotten there yet," Biden said. "We must get there to strengthen public trust and public safety.

He said police groups have played a "constructive" role in reform discussions and said he is "committed to being your partner, as I always have."

The remarks showed the balancing act faced by Biden as the country heads in to November's election for control of Congress. His party needs strong support from communities outraged by police violence and those frightened by crime.

Biden aides are drafting a narrower executive order on policing that the president hopes to sign soon, officials have said, after months of internal negotiations.

Biden has been a loyal ally to law enforcement, dating back to his days in the Senate when he crafted a 1994 crime bill with their help.

But his support for broad reforms following the 2020 murder of Floyd by an officer created some tension with police unions opposed to some of the reforms promoted by Democrats. Those groups include the National Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), which sponsored Sunday's event.

The National Peace Officers' Memorial Service began in 1982 as a small gathering of approximately 120 survivors and supporters of law enforcement. It has since turned into a series of events, attracting thousands of officers and the families of victims to the nation's capital each year.

The number of officers dying at work has increased sharply during the COVID-19 pandemic, data from police groups shows.

HEADLINE	05/15 Pilot shortage leaves airlines scrambling
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnbc.com/2022/05/15/us-pilot-shortage-forces-airlines-to-cut-flights-scramble-for-solutions.html">https://www.cnbc.com/2022/05/15/us-pilot-shortage-forces-airlines-to-cut-flights-scramble-for-solutions.html</a>
GIST	<p>The United States is facing its worst pilot shortage in recent memory, forcing airlines to cut flights just as travelers are returning after more than two years of the Covid-19 pandemic.</p> <p>The crisis has the industry scrambling for solutions.</p> <p>At least one lawmaker is said to be considering legislation that could raise the federally-mandated retirement age for airline pilots from 65 to 67 or higher to extend aviators' time in the skies.</p> <p>A regional airline proposed reducing flight-hour requirements before joining a U.S. carrier, and airlines are rethinking training programs to lower the barrier to entry. Earlier this year, <a href="#">Delta Air Lines</a> joined other big carriers in dropping a four-year degree from its pilot hiring requirements.</p> <p>Several U.S. airlines, including <a href="#">Frontier</a>, are recruiting some pilots from Australia. <a href="#">American Airlines</a> is selling bus tickets for some short routes.</p> <p>But some airline executives warn the shortage could take years to solve.</p> <p>"The pilot shortage for the industry is real, and most airlines are simply not going to be able to realize their capacity plans because there simply aren't enough pilots, at least not for the next five-plus years," <a href="#">United Airlines</a> CEO Scott Kirby said on a quarterly earnings call in April.</p> <p>Kirby estimated the regional airlines United works with currently have about 150 airplanes grounded because of the pilot shortage.</p> <p><b>Roots of the crisis</b></p> <p>The Covid pandemic halted pilot hiring as training and licensing slowed. Airlines handed out <a href="#">early retirement</a> packages to thousands of pilots and other employees aimed to cut labor bills when travel demand cratered during the depths of crisis.</p> <p>"I feel like I walked away at the pinnacle," said one former captain for a major U.S. airline who took an early retirement package in 2020.</p> <p>Now airlines are desperate to <a href="#">hire</a> and <a href="#">train pilots</a>, but the rush may take too long to avoid flight cuts.</p> <p>Major U.S. airlines are trying to hire more than 12,000 pilots combined this year alone, more than double the previous record in annual hiring, according to Kit Darby, a pilot pay consultant and a retired United captain.</p> <p>The shortage is particularly acute at regional carriers that feed major airlines' hubs from smaller cities. While hiring and retention bonuses have returned at those airlines, pay is lower there than at majors, and they are recruiting aggressively from those smaller carriers.</p> <p>Phoenix-based <a href="#">Mesa Air Group</a>, which flies for American and United, lost nearly \$43 million in the last quarter as flight cuts mounted.</p> <p>"We never fathomed attrition levels like this," said Mesa CEO Jonathan Ornstein. "If we don't fly our airplanes we lose money. You saw our quarterly numbers."</p> <p>It takes Mesa an estimated 120 days to replace a pilot who gives two weeks' notice to go to another airline, according to Ornstein.</p> <p>"We could use 200 pilots right now," he said.</p>



Some carriers like Frontier and regional airline [SkyWest](#) are recruiting pilots from Australia under a special visa to help ease the shortfall, but the numbers are small compared with their overall ranks and hiring goals.

Regional carrier Republic Airways, which flies for American, Delta and United, last month petitioned the U.S. government to allow pilots to fly for the airline with 750 hours, half of the 1,500 currently required, if they go through the carrier's training program. There are already exemptions to the 1,500-hour rule, such as for U.S.-military trained pilots and those who attend two- and four-year programs that include flight training.

The proposal has received pushback from family members of victims of 2009's [Colgan Air 3407](#) crash, the last fatal U.S. passenger commercial airline crash. The tragedy killed all 49 people on board and one on the ground, and ushered in the so-called 1,500-hour rule, aimed at ensuring pilot experience.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., is considering introducing congressional legislation that could raise the mandatory airline pilot retirement age to at least 67 from the current age of 65, according to people familiar with Graham's plans. About a third of the airline-qualified pilots in the U.S. are between the ages of 51 and 59, and 13% of the country's airline pilots will reach retirement age within the five years, according to the Regional Airline Association.

Graham's office did not respond requests for comment.

### **Growth curtailed**

Pilot and other worker shortages have forced airlines to [rethink their growth](#) plans. [JetBlue Airways](#) and [Alaska Airlines](#) are among carriers that have recently trimmed capacity.

[SkyWest](#), for its part, told the Transportation Department it plans to drop service to 29 smaller cities that the government subsidizes through the Essential Air Service.

Service reductions could isolate smaller U.S. cities but Darby, the pilot pay consultant, said it could mean an opening for smaller competitors that don't rely on regional airlines as much as major network airlines.

"If they don't fly it, maybe a smaller airline will," he said.

One of the biggest hurdles to bringing in new pilots is the cost of schooling. While salaries for widebody captains at major airlines can exceed \$350,000 a year, getting qualified takes years.

At ATP Flight School, the largest in the country, it costs close to \$92,000 for a seven-month, full-time program to get initial licenses. It can then take about 18 months or longer for pilots to build up enough hours to fly, often by instructing student pilots or sometimes by flying banners near beaches.

"It's not a car wash," Darby said. "You can't just get someone to come in from the street."

In December, United started teaching the first students at its own flight school, the United Aviate Academy, in Goodyear, Arizona, with a goal of training [5,000 pilots there by 2030](#). United says it aims for half of that number to be women or people of color. The company covers the cost of pilots' training up to the point of receiving their private pilots' license, which it estimates to be around \$17,000 per student.

Other carriers have turned to low-interest loans or other initiatives to ease the financial burden on students. "There's no quick fix," Darby said.

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HEADLINE	05/16 Wildfires growing risk some homeowners
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cbsnews.com/news/wildfire-risk-for-homeowners-state-county/">https://www.cbsnews.com/news/wildfire-risk-for-homeowners-state-county/</a>

Americans facing the toughest housing market in years aren't just facing high property prices and rising mortgage rates — they're also grappling with the risk of natural disasters, such as floods, tornadoes and, increasingly, wildfires.

Fires are getting more [intense](#) and more frequent due to [climate change](#), which is drying out vegetation and making fires more likely to spark and burn longer. Notably, that's also increasing the likelihood of wildfires in areas known for temperate and humid climates.

As a result, Florida now has the third-largest number of properties at risk for fire, after California and Texas, according to new data from the First Street Foundation. Today, 3.9 million properties in the state — or 4 in 10 — face some risk of wildfire, according to First Street. California has the most properties with some wildfire risk, at 4.6 million, while Texas has 4.5 million, according to First Street.

Nationwide, First Street's [research](#) shows about 26 million homes have at least some wildfire risk — a much greater number than has previously been reported.

Other Western states have a much higher portion of properties at risk of fire. In Wyoming and New Mexico, two-thirds of all properties have at least a moderate risk of fire; in Utah and Arizona, almost 60% do, and in Montana and Oklahoma about half do.

First Street, which has quantified the [effects of climate change](#) and [flooding](#) on the nation's infrastructure, decided on a 1% risk over 30 years (the lifetime of a typical mortgage) as a meaningful floor to show the potential impact of fire damage. While far fewer homes are at risk of fire than other disasters, like flooding, the potential impact of fire is much more severe, said Jeremy Porter, First Street's chief research officer.

"If there's a fire that touches your property, then it's not that you're seeing \$20,000 of damage, it's total destruction," Porter said. "The scale of damage is hard to grapple with."

### **More fire-prone areas**

First Street's research shows that wildfire risks are likely to grow in the next 30 year — especially in areas not currently known for wildfires.

"Wildfire risk is increasing in places where people may not expect it," said Sara Brinton, lead product manager for Realtor.com. "People are really familiar with wildfire in Colorado, California, but wildfire risk is a growing problem in Florida, North Carolina, New Jersey."

Realtor.com has assigned a wildfire risk score for every property on its site in the continental U.S. — including those that aren't for sale — to educate homeowners and potential buyers, Brinton said. (Eventually, the feature will also be available for rentals.) The scores take into account the features of an individual building that make it more or less likely to burn, including the layout of the property, proximity of vegetation, building materials and even what type of windows a home has.

"Single-pane versus dual-pane windows are a big determinant of whether a house will burn in a wildfire," said Ed Kearns, chief data officer at First Street. Features like metal screens on attic vents can also improve a house's ability to resist in a wildfire.

Homebuyers are increasingly concerned about the risk of natural disasters to their properties as climate change makes mudslides, floods and wildfires more frequent. A recent [survey](#) by Realtor.com and HarrisX found that more than three in four recent homebuyers consider natural disasters when choosing where to buy a home.

"We hear regularly from consumers that it's become so important in the homebuying journey," said Sara Brinton, lead product manager for Realtor.com.

Two years ago, Realtor.com added a flood risk feature that lists the likelihood of flood damage for all properties. It's since become one of the most popular features on the site, Brinton said.

### **Warming climate makes fires more likely**

Climate change, brought on by the burning of fossil fuels, is making drought more likely in places like the [Southeast](#) and other parts of the East Coast, which have not historically been known for fire, noted Kearns. Hotter temperatures can [dry out](#) normally humid forested areas and make fire more likely to catch and spread.

"It only takes about 100 hours of it being dry under hot conditions for fuel to become combustible fuel," he said.

While Eastern fires typically don't get as large as they do in the West, denser population in the East mean thousands of people are potentially affected. And as the climate warms, the risks of fire will grow, noted Matthew Eby, First Street's executive director.

"The last five years have been horrific, and that's kind of the new norm — over the next few decades it's only going to get more intense," he said.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/16 McDonald's selling its Russian business</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cbsnews.com/news/mcdonalds-selling-its-russian-business-trying-to-have-buyer-keep-its-62000-workers/">https://www.cbsnews.com/news/mcdonalds-selling-its-russian-business-trying-to-have-buyer-keep-its-62000-workers/</a>
GIST	<p>McDonald's said Monday that it's started the process of selling its Russian business, which includes 850 restaurants that employ 62,000 people, making it the latest major Western corporation to exit Russia since it invaded Ukraine in February.</p> <p>The fast food giant pointed to the humanitarian crisis caused by the war, saying holding onto its business in Russia "is no longer tenable, nor is it consistent with McDonald's values."</p> <p>The Chicago-based company announced in early March that it was temporarily closing its stores in Russia but would continue to pay employees. On Monday, it said it would seek to have a Russian buyer hire those workers and pay them until the sale closes. It didn't identify a prospective buyer.</p> <p>CEO Chris Kempczinski said the "dedication and loyalty to McDonald's" of employees and hundreds of Russian suppliers made it a difficult decision to leave.</p> <p>"However, we have a commitment to our global community and must remain steadfast in our values," Kempczinski said in a statement, "and our commitment to our values means that we can no longer keep the arches shining there."</p> <p>As it tries to sell its restaurants, McDonald's said it plans to start removing golden arches and other symbols and signs with the company's name. It said it will keep its trademarks in Russia.</p> <p>The first McDonald's in Russia opened in the middle of Moscow more than three decades ago, shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall. It was a powerful symbol of the easing of Cold War tensions between the United States and Soviet Union.</p> <p>McDonald's was the first American fast food restaurant to open in the Soviet Union, which would collapse in 1991.</p> <p>McDonald's decision to leave comes as other American food and beverage giants including Coca-Cola, Pepsi and Starbucks have paused or closed operations in Russia in the face of Western sanctions.</p>

	<p>Corporations from British energy giants Shell and BP to French carmaker Renault have pulled out of Russia, taking a hit to their bottom lines as they seek to sell their holdings there. Other companies have stayed at least partially, with some facing blowback.</p> <p>On Monday, Renault gave its Russian assets to the Kremlin, both parties announced, "marking the first major nationalization since the onset of sanctions over Moscow's military campaign in Ukraine," Agence France-Presse said.</p> <p>McDonald's said it expects to record a charge against earnings of between \$1.2 billion and \$1.4 billion over leaving Russia.</p> <p>Its restaurants in Ukraine are closed, but the company said it's continuing to pay full salaries for its employees there.</p> <p>McDonald's has more than 39,000 locations across more than 100 countries. Most are owned by franchisees - only about 5% are owned and operated by the company.</p> <p>McDonald's said exiting Russia won't change its forecast of adding a net 1,300 restaurants this year, which will contribute about 1.5% to companywide sales growth.</p> <p>Last month, McDonald's reported that it earned \$1.1 billion in the first quarter, down from more than \$1.5 billion a year earlier. Revenue was nearly \$5.7 billion.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>05/16 EU's Russia sanctions effort slows</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/eus-russia-sanctions-effort-slows-oil-dependency-84745855">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/eus-russia-sanctions-effort-slows-oil-dependency-84745855</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>BRUSSELS -- The European Union's efforts to impose a new round of sanctions against Russia over the war in Ukraine appeared to be bogged down on Monday, as a small group of countries opposed a ban on imports of Russian oil.</p> <p>Since Russia invaded on Feb. 24, the bloc has implemented five rounds of sanctions on Moscow. President Vladimir Putin, senior officials, more than 350 lawmakers and pro-Kremlin oligarchs were hit with asset freezes and travel bans. Banks, the transport sector and alleged propaganda outlets were targeted.</p> <p>What could have taken years in the past has been achieved in less than three months — relative light speed for the 27-nation bloc. But limiting Russia's energy income by weaning their dependency off its oil — not to mention gas supplies — is proving a tougher nut to crack.</p> <p>The EU's executive branch, the European Commission, proposed on May 4 a sixth package of war sanctions that included a ban on oil imports from Russia. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen conceded at the time that securing the agreement of all "will not be easy."</p> <p>Hungary is one of a number of landlocked countries that are highly dependent on Russian oil, along with the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Bulgaria also has reservations. Hungary gets more than 60% of its oil from Russia, and 85% of its natural gas.</p> <p>"We will do our best in order to deblock the situation. I cannot ensure that it is going to happen because positions are quite strong," EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell told reporters as he arrived to chair a meeting of the bloc's foreign ministers in Brussels.</p> <p>"Some member states face more difficulties because they are more dependent, because they are landlocked," Borrell said, and "they only have oil through pipelines, and coming from Russia."</p>

Muddying the waters is Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban's relationship with Putin. Orban is widely considered to be one of the Russian leader's closest European allies. He has only reluctantly supported previous EU sanctions, including a phased-in embargo on Russian coal.

Since taking office in 2010, Orban has deepened Hungary's dependency on Russian energy and says its geography and energy infrastructure make an oil shutdown impossible. His EU partners are at odds over what they believe is driving his reluctance to target oil.

"The whole union is being held hostage by one member state," Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis said. He said that the European Commission's proposal offered members a phaseout of Russian oil until Dec 31, 2024, and that "everybody expected that this would be enough."

But his Irish counterpart, Simon Coveney, acknowledged that "these are difficult, difficult issues for some countries," and he added: "Let's not focus on obstacles and negatives today."

At the same time, Coveney said, "we need to get on and do this. We need to send a very clear signal to the Kremlin and to Moscow that the cost of their continuing war in Ukraine, which is completely unjustifiable, will continue to increase."

For now, the ball is in Hungary's court, as the most vocal member of those opposed. Officials have said that Orban appears to be seeking EU money for energy infrastructure investment. Any compromise is only likely to be found in his talks with von der Leyen, not between ministers.

The oil standoff raises questions about whether the EU has reached the limits of its unity on sanctions. Targeting Russia's gas sector, on which many more countries are dependent, is likely to prove even tougher.

Officials said before Monday's meeting that a political agreement is likely to be found on a fourth tranche of money to help supply weapons to Ukraine. It would bring to 2 billion euros (\$2.1 billion) the total sum available to fund the purchase of arms and other nonlethal assistance.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/16 Russia faces diplomatic, military hurdles</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/russian-war-effort-runs-diplomatic-military-hurdles-84743124">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/russian-war-effort-runs-diplomatic-military-hurdles-84743124</a>
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine -- Its military bogged down in a grinding conflict in eastern Ukraine, Russia lost diplomatic ground over the weekend as two more European nations moved closer to joining NATO.</p> <p>Finland announced Sunday that it was seeking to join the alliance, saying Russia's invasion of Ukraine nearly three months ago had changed Europe's security landscape. Finland shares a 1,340-kilometer (830-mile) land border and the Gulf of Finland with Russia.</p> <p>Several hours later, Sweden's governing party endorsed a bid for membership, which could lead to an application in days.</p> <p>Those moves would be a serious blow to Russian President Vladimir Putin, who has called NATO's post-Cold War expansion in Eastern Europe a threat and cited it as a reason for attacking Ukraine. NATO says it is a purely defensive alliance.</p> <p>NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, meeting with top diplomats from the alliance in Berlin, said the war "is not going as Moscow had planned."</p> <p>"Ukraine can win this war," he said, adding that NATO must continue to offer military support to Kyiv.</p>

Britain's Defense Ministry said Monday that Belarus was deploying special operations forces along its border with Ukraine and air defense, artillery and missile units to training ranges in the west of the country.

Belarus's forces have not been directly involved in the conflict, though its territory was used as a staging post for Russia's initial advance on Kyiv and Chernihiv. Russia has also launched air sorties and missile strikes from Belarus.

The presence of Belarusian troops near the border may keep Ukrainian troops pinned down there, preventing them from moving to support the counteroffensive in the Donbas, Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland.

Russian and Ukrainian fighters have been battling village-by-village for the Donbas, where Ukraine's military has fought Moscow-backed separatists for eight years.

On Sunday, a Ukrainian battalion in the Kharkiv region, where Russian troops have been pushed back by a counteroffensive, reached the Russian border and made a victorious video there addressed to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. The video posted on Facebook by Ukraine's Ministry of Defense shows a dozen fighters around a post covered with blue and yellow, Ukraine's colors.

One said the unit went "to the dividing line with the Russian Federation, the occupying country. Mr. President, we have reached it. We are here." Other fighters made victory signs and raised their fists.

Ukraine's military reported Monday that Russian forces were concentrating on "maintaining positions and preventing the advance of our troops toward the border."

Determining a full picture of the fighting, especially the unfolding battle in the east, is difficult. Airstrikes and artillery barrages make it extremely dangerous for reporters to move around, and both Ukraine and the Moscow-backed separatists fighting in the east restrict reporting from combat zones.

The Ukrainian military said that Russian forces were focusing their latest attacks on the Donetsk region in the east, targeting civilian and military sites in multiple towns.

Russia troops also continued air and artillery strikes around the Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol, the last holdout of several hundred Ukrainian forces in the strategically important city, the Ukrainian General Staff said.

In an online news conference, many wives of the besieged soldiers urged the international community to help gain the release of "the entire garrison," which is suffering from a dire lack of food, water and medicine.

Turkey's presidential spokesman, Ibrahim Kalin, said his country had offered to evacuate wounded Ukrainian soldiers and civilians by ship from Azovstal, the official state broadcaster TRT said.

Over the weekend, Russian forces hit a chemical plant and 11 high-rise buildings in Siverodonetsk, in the Donbas, regional Gov. Serhii Haidaii said. Russian missiles also destroyed "military infrastructure facilities" in the Yavoriv district of western Ukraine, near the Polish border, the Lviv region's governor said. Lviv is a gateway for Western-supplied weapons to Ukraine.

And Ukrainian forces stopped an attempted Russian advance near the eastern city of Izyum, the governor of Ukraine's Kharkiv region, Oleh Sinegubov, reported.

The Ukrainian claims could not be independently verified, but Western officials also painted a somber picture for Russia.



Britain's Defense Ministry estimated that the Russian army had lost up to one-third of the combat strength it committed to Ukraine in late February and was failing to gain any substantial territory. "Under the current conditions, Russia is unlikely to dramatically accelerate its rate of advance over the next 30 days," the ministry said.

Despite the fighting in the wider Kharkiv region and the threat of Russian missile attacks, many people were returning home to Kharkiv and other cities around Ukraine, Anna Malyar, deputy head of the Ministry of Defense, said.

Refugees were returning not just because of optimism that the war might ebb.

"Living somewhere just like that, not working, paying for housing, eating ... they are forced to return for financial reasons," Malyar said in remarks carried by the RBK-Ukraine news agency.

Countries neighboring Russia and Ukraine worry they could be next after Russia invaded Ukraine.

Sweden's parliament on Monday was to discuss joining NATO after the ruling Social Democratic Party endorsed a plan to do so. An announcement by the Cabinet was expected to follow.

During a visit to Sweden, U.S. Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell said Sunday that Finland and Sweden would be "important additions" to NATO and that the U.S. should swiftly ratify their membership. A delegation of GOP senators led by McConnell made a surprise visit to Kyiv on Saturday.

NATO operates by consensus, however, and Turkey has cast doubts over adding Finland and Sweden as members.

Ukraine celebrated a morale-boosting victory on Saturday night in the Eurovision Song Contest. The folk-rap ensemble Kalush Orchestra won the glitzy pan-European competition with its song "Stefania," which has become a Ukrainian wartime anthem.

Zelenskyy vowed his nation would claim the customary winner's honor of hosting the next annual competition.

"Step by step, we are forcing the occupiers to leave the Ukrainian land," Zelenskyy said.

The band's frontman, Oleh Psiuk, said at a news conference Sunday that the musicians were "ready to fight" when they return home. Ukraine's government prohibits men between 18 and 60 from leaving the country, but the all-male band's six members got special permission to go to Italy to represent Ukraine in the contest.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/15 UK: Russia lost 1/3<sup>rd</sup> invasion force</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/15/russia-likely-to-have-lost-third-of-its-ukraine-invasion-force-says-uk">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/15/russia-likely-to-have-lost-third-of-its-ukraine-invasion-force-says-uk</a>
GIST	<p>Russia may have lost a third of the invasion force it sent into <a href="#">Ukraine</a> as its offensive continues to struggle in the face of stiff resistance, British military intelligence has said.</p> <p>In its latest assessment, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) said the Russian campaign in the east of Ukraine had "lost momentum" and was now "significantly behind schedule".</p> <p>At a meeting of Nato foreign ministers in Berlin, the foreign secretary, Liz Truss, said it was essential to maintain support for the government in Kyiv to help it "push Russia out".</p> <p>She said in a statement: "Putin must face a sustained defeat in Ukraine, Russia must be contained and such aggression must never happen again.</p>

“Ukraine’s security must come from it being able to defend itself. Allies must support Ukraine’s move to Nato-standard equipment, immediately providing artillery, training and the required expertise.”

The Nato deputy secretary general, Mircea Geoană, said the Ukrainians were now in a position to defeat the Russians and win the war.

“The brutal invasion of Russia is losing momentum,” he told reporters.

“With significant support from allies and partners in billions of dollars, in military support, in financial support, humanitarian support, we know that with the bravery of the Ukrainian people and army and with our help, Ukraine can win this war.”

The Russians switched the focus of their offensive to the eastern Donbas region – which was already part-held by pro-Moscow separatists – after their advance on Kyiv was driven back.

However the MoD said despite small-scale initial advances, they had failed to make any substantial territorial gains over the past month while suffering “consistently high levels of attrition”.

It said the offensive was being further hampered by the loss of “critical enablers” such as bridging equipment and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance drones.

“Russia has now likely suffered losses of one-third of the ground combat force it committed in February,” it said.

“Russian forces are increasingly constrained by degraded enabling capabilities, continued low morale and reduced combat effectiveness.

“Many of these capabilities cannot be quickly replaced or reconstituted and are likely to continue to hinder Russian operations in Ukraine.

“Under the current conditions, Russia is unlikely to dramatically accelerate its rate of advance over the next 30 days.”

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HEADLINE	05/16 Why are masks still worn in Japan, SKorea?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/16/why-are-masks-still-worn-in-japan-and-south-korea-covid">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/16/why-are-masks-still-worn-in-japan-and-south-korea-covid</a>
GIST	<p>For more than two years, the people of Japan and <a href="#">South Korea</a> have been united by their embrace of little white rectangles. While the US and countries in Europe debated the efficacy of masks at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, Japanese and South Koreans quickly covered up, uncomplainingly and with few exceptions.</p> <p>Explanations for the wildly contrasting coronavirus death tolls in developed countries are many and varied, but in north-east Asia – more than anywhere else – mask-wearing has been at the forefront of the public health response to the virus.</p> <p>But with cases stabilising in <a href="#">Japan</a> and South Korea, are people now willing to live without their masks?</p> <p>This month, South Korea, which has recorded 23,606 Covid-19 deaths in its population of 52 million, ended a requirement for masks to be worn outdoors – except for gatherings of 50 or more people – but kept the mandate for indoors and public transport.</p> <p>Choi Il-woo, a Seoul office worker, said he had enjoyed removing his mask last week. “With summer approaching, it feels so nice to finally be able to take off my mask when I go for a walk,” he said. “But there are still a lot of people wearing masks on the streets, so I think we still have to be careful.”</p>

Government officials cited a downward trend in daily cases of Covid-19 after its most recent wave, driven by the Omicron variant, peaked in mid-March.

In Japan, where just over 30,000 people have died from the virus, the imminent arrival of a long, humid summer and the increased risk of heatstroke prompted some experts and officials to call for an end to advice to wear face coverings outdoors.

“We recommend that people take off their masks outside as long as sufficient distance is maintained, especially when temperatures and humidity are high,” said Hirokazu Matsuno, the chief cabinet secretary.

Despite the [wide acceptance of face coverings in Japan](#), some have voiced frustration that, more than two years into the pandemic, there are few signs of a return to a largely maskless existence, even as restrictions are eased or abandoned in other countries.

Akino Yoshihara, an interpreter living in Kyoto, said she would feel “much more comfortable” without a mask but would continue to wear hers to prevent the spread of the virus. “Even if the government encourages us to remove our masks, I’m sure many people would still wear them,” she said.

Toshio Nakagawa, president of the Japan Medical Association, suggested face coverings could remain the norm for the foreseeable future. “I believe that the day people can stop wearing masks will never come in Japan so long as the country continues seeing coronavirus cases,” he said.

Japan’s government recommends face coverings at schools and workplaces and in other settings with large numbers of people, and encourages them to avoid the “[three Cs](#)” – close-contact settings, closed spaces and crowded places.

The country has depended on high levels of public acceptance for mask-wearing and other anti-virus measures, since its government does not have the legal power to impose lockdowns or make face coverings mandatory.

In a country where mask-wearing is common during the flu and hay fever seasons, few complained about continuing the habit throughout the pandemic. And with summer approaching, there are few signs that people are ready to abandon their masks, however uncomfortable they may be at the hottest time of the year.

According to a survey by Nippon Information, more than 50% of respondents wanted to continue using masks, with 22% saying they would wear theirs “all the time”. Only 13.5% said they wanted to cast them off altogether.

Misae Minami only removes hers during her morning runs, when there are few people around. “I always keep my mask on outdoors if there are people within 2 metres of me,” said Minami, a teacher in Osaka, adding that she had no plans to change her behaviour. “We still feel a lot of pressure to wear masks, and as a teacher I always have to tell my students to keep theirs on. I have to be a role model.”

Kim Ki-kyung, an office worker in Seoul, said he barely noticed his mask, given that it had been an essential accoutrement for so long. “Also, I don’t need to think about grooming or my facial expressions, and it helps protect against pollution such as fine dust. And you have to wear one when you go indoors, so it’s annoying to take it on and off.”

While Japan has a tiny anti-mask movement, peer pressure to stay covered up could be overwhelming, said Yuki Nakagome, a Tokyo-based writer who has started lowering his mask on warm days when no one else is around. “There is a certain pressure to keep wearing masks that may be peculiar to Japanese society, and I don’t see that pressure moving in the opposite direction,” he said. “No one wants to be the first person to remove their mask.”

HEADLINE	05/16 NKorea calls up army for Covid response
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/16/kim-jong-un-calls-in-the-army-to-respond-to-north-koreas-covid-19-crisis">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/16/kim-jong-un-calls-in-the-army-to-respond-to-north-koreas-covid-19-crisis</a>
GIST	<p>Kim Jong-un has criticised North Korea's pandemic response and ordered the army to help distribute medicine, state media said Monday, as the country said <a href="#">50 people had died</a> since first reporting an outbreak of Covid-19.</p> <p>More than one million people have been sickened by what Pyongyang is referring to as "fever", state media said, despite Kim ordering nationwide lockdowns in a bid to slow the spread of disease through the unvaccinated population.</p> <p>After two years denying <a href="#">North Korea</a> had any cases of Covid-19, last week officials confirmed that there had been a Covid outbreak in the country.</p> <p>In a sign of how serious the situation may be, Kim "strongly criticised" healthcare officials over their response to epidemic prevention – specifically a failure to keep pharmacies open 24/7 to distribute medicine.</p> <p>He ordered the army to get to work "on immediately stabilising the supply of medicines in Pyongyang", the capital, where Omicron was detected last week in North Korea's first official reported cases of Covid-19.</p> <p>Kim has put himself front and centre of <a href="#">North Korea's disease response</a>, overseeing near-daily emergency politburo meetings on the outbreak, which he has said is causing "great upheaval" in the country.</p> <p>The failure to distribute medicine properly was "because officials of the Cabinet and public health sector in charge of the supply have not rolled up their sleeves, not properly recognizing the present crisis," said Kim, according to state media KCNA.</p> <p>Kim, who visited pharmacies to inspect first-hand, "strongly criticised the Cabinet and public health sector for their irresponsible work attitude," said KCNA.</p> <p>North Korea has one of the world's worst healthcare systems, with poorly equipped hospitals, few intensive care units, and no Covid treatment drugs or mass testing ability, experts say.</p> <p>"While visiting a pharmacy, Kim Jong-un saw with his eyes the shortage of medicines in North Korea," Cheong Seong-jang, researcher at the Sejong Institute told AFP. "He may have guessed but the situation may have been more serious than he had expected."</p> <p>KCNA said that as of 15 May, a total of 50 people had died, with 1,213,550 cases of "fever" and over half a million currently receiving medical treatment.</p> <p>North Korea had maintained a rigid coronavirus blockade since the pandemic began, but with massive Omicron outbreaks in neighbouring countries, experts said it was inevitable Covid would sneak in.</p> <p>Kim's public criticism is a sign that the situation on the ground is grim, said Yang Moo-jin, professor at the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul. "He is pointing out the overall inadequacy of the quarantine system," he said.</p> <p>Kim has previously said the country will "actively learn" from China's pandemic management strategy, according to KCNA.</p> <p>China – the world's only major economy still maintaining a zero-Covid policy – is battling multiple Omicron outbreaks with lockdowns in some major cities, including financial hub Shanghai, sparking increasing public frustration.</p>

	<p>North Korea has previously turned down offers of Covid vaccines from China and the World Health Organization's Covax scheme, but both Beijing and Seoul have issued fresh offers of aid since the outbreak was announced.</p> <p>North Korea is likely to need international assistance to get through the massive Omicron surge, Yang said.</p> <p>"If China's assistance is not enough to overcome the outbreak, North Korea will ask the South, the United States or international organisations in the end," he said.</p> <p>US President Joe Biden is set to visit Seoul later this week, with discussions of Pyongyang's weapons programs and Covid-19 outbreak likely to top the agenda.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/15 Election officials steel selves for threats</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/election-officials-steel-themselves-for-threats-as-midterm-season-gears-up-11652619600?mod=hp_lead_pos5">https://www.wsj.com/articles/election-officials-steel-themselves-for-threats-as-midterm-season-gears-up-11652619600?mod=hp_lead_pos5</a>
GIST	<p>Forrest Lehman, the elections director in Pennsylvania's Lycoming County, was brought up short earlier this year by a poll worker's question: What should I do if I get a death threat?</p> <p>"I never would have had a question like that before 2020," said Mr. Lehman, expressing relief that he knew of no such threats in his largely rural county. "I don't expect that to happen," he added, "but it's illustrative that it's on their mind now."</p> <p>Long accustomed to working out of the spotlight, a number of election administrators say threats and harassment have become a constant undertone to their work since the contentious aftermath of the 2020 presidential election, when then-President <a href="#">Donald Trump</a>, a Republican, and his allies began spreading <a href="#">unsupported claims of widespread fraud</a> after his defeat.</p> <p>Offices in some jurisdictions have implemented new security measures as they prepare for the 2022 midterms, the biggest test of the country's voting system since then and a crucial proving ground for what could be sharp challenges surrounding the 2024 presidential vote.</p> <p>Primary contests are already in full swing, including high-profile races in Pennsylvania and North Carolina on Tuesday.</p> <p>Some 77% of local election officials feel that threats against election workers have increased in recent years, according to a survey conducted by New York University Law School's Brennan Center for Justice, a think tank that has pushed for federal funding to improve security at election offices. About one in six election officials in the poll said they have personally received threats.</p> <p>"Threats of violence directed at me are a frequent occurrence," said Colorado Secretary of State Jena Griswold, a Democrat, adding that she has heard similar accounts from Republican and Democratic election officials alike since the 2020 presidential vote.</p> <p>Voting officials said the troubling communications have come mostly from people upset over the victory of President Biden, a Democrat, in the 2020 election. But other matters have also complicated election officials' jobs. The Covid-19 pandemic made it challenging to find poll workers and voting locations, and many states faced logistical challenges as they expanded mail voting.</p> <p>In Fulton County, Georgia, a Democratic stronghold that includes most of Atlanta, the county's election director, Richard Barron, resigned last month after nine years on the job. "It just gets exhausting to have to deal with this stuff every single day, and there's nothing that isn't controversial," Mr. Barron said.</p>

Fulton County was a target of Mr. Trump's anger after he lost Georgia by a narrow margin in 2020. A state-appointed monitor who observed the county's elections reported sloppy processes and disorganization but no evidence of fraudulent conduct by county officials. The county now has a temporary election director and is still looking for a permanent successor to Mr. Barron.

Across Pennsylvania's 67 counties, roughly three dozen county election directors or deputies have left since January 2020, according to state officials, though some were planned retirements. Election officials there pointed to the increased workload stemming from the pandemic driving up demand for mail ballots, saying that while mail voting proved to be a popular option for voters, election offices needed more funding and staff to handle the logistics.

"You started to see directors just dropping like flies," said Mr. Lehman, Lycoming County's nonpartisan elections director.

In Philadelphia, when a top role opened up late last year on the city's Board of Elections, Seth Bluestein wanted the job. But he had to think hard about it. As chief deputy commissioner during the 2020 presidential election, he had faced personal threats of the sort that have targeted many election administrators across the U.S. Police were stationed outside his home to protect his family.

Ultimately, Mr. Bluestein said, the turmoil surrounding the country's voting system since the last presidential election reinforced his commitment to the work of administering the popular vote.

He was confirmed in February as the lone Republican commissioner on Philadelphia's three-member election board, which can't have more than two members from the same party. "The experience in 2020, while for some people was a reason to retire, for me is a motivating factor for remaining in office," he said.

Officials have found occasional cases of voter fraud in elections across the country. But no court or election authority has found evidence of widespread fraud that could reverse Mr. Biden's 2020 presidential election victory.

The U.S. Justice Department said in January it had received more than 850 reports of threats and harassment to election workers. A Justice Department task force on election threats, which started tracking such incidents last year, said this month it has dozens of open investigations and has prosecuted two cases so far, a pace some election officials say has been too slow.

In one of those cases, federal prosecutors say a Texas man allegedly [threatened to kill Georgia government officials](#), including writing in a Jan. 5, 2021, message on Craigslist that it was "time to put a bullet" in one official, according to an indictment, in which the names and specific roles of the targeted officials weren't disclosed.

In the second case, a Nevada man allegedly made threatening phone calls to a worker in the Nevada secretary of state's office, according to court documents, including saying, "You are all going to die."

Detroit's city clerk, Janice Winfrey, said she acquired a gun and a concealed-carry license after receiving threats. "I never, in all my time living in Detroit, felt the need to get such," said Ms. Winfrey, who is running for Congress as a Democrat. Her office installed security glass last year.

In Philadelphia, the elections office has moved to a new warehouse with more space for counting ballots and storing voting machines, and Mr. Bluestein said there are plans to install a metal detector at the entrance. He upgraded his home-security system after the 2020 presidential election.

"When we started working in election administration, we were told that it was a boring job," Mr. Bluestein said. "That was not the case in 2020."



	<p>Some state legislatures have taken up the issue of election-workers' security. Oregon and Maine—both Democratic-controlled—passed laws this year toughening penalties for harassing election workers. Similar legislation in Democratic-led Colorado was approved by the state legislature and is awaiting the governor's signature.</p> <p>Many election officials are sticking it out. In Oregon's Jackson County, County Clerk Chris Walker arrived at her office a few weeks after the 2020 election to find a message painted in tall letters on a nearby parking lot: "VOTE DONT [sic] WORK" and "NEXT TIME BULLETS." Her office has since added more security measures, she said, including aiming cameras on the parking lot.</p> <p>"Have I questioned what I'm doing? Yes. Do I plan on going away? No," said Ms. Walker, a registered Republican whose position is an officially nonpartisan office. "What we do is bigger than just us as individuals," she said. "It's what makes America work, with freedom and democracy."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/15 Somalia picks former leader as president</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/somalias-parliament-meets-to-choose-president-in-delayed-election-11652640465?mod=hp_listb_pos2">https://www.wsj.com/articles/somalias-parliament-meets-to-choose-president-in-delayed-election-11652640465?mod=hp_listb_pos2</a>
GIST	<p>Somalia's lawmakers voted Sunday to bring back a former leader, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, and oust President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, whose attempts to delay elections and remain in office beyond his term alienated the U.S. and other Western countries.</p> <p>Mr. Mohamud's election to a four-year term comes as Somalia, which sits on the tip of East Africa, faces profound threats poorly addressed by the country's divided leaders. Al-Shabaab, the local al Qaeda affiliate, has gained ground in rural areas of Somalia and carried out devastating attacks in Mogadishu, the capital. The country is experiencing drought that has left some six million people facing acute food insecurity and 1.4 million children under the age of five with acute malnutrition, according to the United Nations.</p> <p>The security situation is so unstable that the lawmakers conducted their vote in a hangar on a fortified military base, protected by troops from the African Union.</p> <p>The U.S., Europe and other nations with interests in Somali stability blamed Mr. Mohamed, known widely by his nickname, Farmaajo, for stalling the elections and worsening political gridlock. "They had to replace him if they had any hope of re-establishing some decent relationship with the international community," said J. Peter Pham, a former senior State Department envoy.</p> <p>The 66-year-old Mr. Mohamud won a 214-110 majority in the third and final parliamentary voting round late Sunday; Somalia's presidents are elected by legislators, rather than in one-person-one-vote direct balloting. Supporters fired guns into the air to celebrate the victory in Mogadishu, according to witnesses.</p> <p>Mr. Mohamed tweeted his congratulations to Mr. Mohamud. "I urge all my fellow citizens to support &amp; pray for his success," he wrote.</p> <p>Mr. Mohamud served as Somalia's president from 2012 to 2017, when Mr. Mohamed won election.</p> <p>Critics say both men led administrations perforated with corruption, and say the election process itself was influenced by bribery.</p> <p>Western countries grew increasingly frustrated with Mr. Mohamed as the elections were delayed for more than a year. Mr. Mohamed was supposed to step down in February of last year. In an unusual step in March, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken restricted visas for Somali officials it deemed responsible for "undermining the democratic process" in the country.</p>

	<p>“Journalists and opposition party members working to support democratic institutions and transparent processes have been targeted with harassment, intimidation, arrest, and violence,” Mr. Blinken said.</p> <p>International donors gave Somali authorities a Tuesday deadline to hold the vote or risk losing critical funding, including a \$400 million emergency loan from the International Monetary Fund.</p> <p>Ultimately, Mr. Mohamud beat out some three dozen candidates for the presidency.</p> <p>The change in leadership comes as President Biden is considering <a href="#">a Pentagon request to station hundreds of U.S. commandos</a> in Somalia to help local forces fight al-Shabaab, which has threatened U.S. interests in the region. Then-President <a href="#">Donald Trump</a> pulled American troops from the country and moved them to neighboring Kenya and Djibouti shortly before leaving office last year, a move that U.S. commanders say <a href="#">has strengthened the insurgents</a>.</p> <p>The government announced a dusk-to-dawn curfew in Mogadishu for Sunday, and most shops and streets were deserted, according to witnesses. Last week, four people, including two government soldiers, were killed and at least seven injured when a suicide bomber attacked a security checkpoint near a political rally at heavily defended Mogadishu airport, police said.</p> <p>The U.S. Embassy and many international organizations are situated within the airport security bubble.</p> <p>Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has worsened Somalia’s food shortage just as the rains appear to be failing for the fourth straight season. Somalia normally buys between 49% and 59% of its wheat from Ukraine, and another 33% to 43% from Russia, supplies now largely cut off, according to the U.N.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/15 Anger on Buffalo’s East side</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/15/nyregion/shooting-buffalo-ny">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/15/nyregion/shooting-buffalo-ny</a>
GIST	<p>BUFFALO — They rallied at a Black Lives Matter demonstration on the concrete steps of a local park, calling for politicians to direct more resources to Buffalo’s Black residents living on the largely impoverished East Side.</p> <p>They tossed heavy bags of eggs, bread and water over their shoulders to lug for blocks, lamenting that their neighborhood was once again a food desert while the only full-service supermarket for miles was being swarmed by investigators.</p> <p>And on the streets outside the Tops supermarket, which a gunman targeted on Saturday because he knew it served many Black people, they shouted through bullhorns, denouncing the racism that fueled a massacre — but that also shaped their experiences long before.</p> <p>One day after a quiet, residential neighborhood in western New York became victim to the worst racist attack in the United States in recent years, scenes from the afternoon served as small windows into a collective anguish and anger that did not originate with the gunfire.</p> <p>“We don’t want to be protected after the fact,” said Marlene Brown, 58, who is Black. For more than a decade she has lived just blocks away from the Tops supermarket, where 10 people were killed. “We want to be protected and treated like we matter,” she said, “without it taking a white supremacist shooting up our community.”</p> <p>She added: “Time and time again they’ve shown nobody cares about us here. It’s a pattern.”</p> <p>The gunfire on Saturday afternoon forced the Masten Park neighborhood in East Buffalo to become the latest place — after <a href="#">El Paso</a>; <a href="#">Christchurch</a>, New Zealand; and <a href="#">Charleston</a>, S.C. — to grapple with a mass killing driven by white supremacist ideology and the wave of attention that follows mass shootings.</p>

But for many residents, the experience has prompted fury at what they see as the hypocrisy of a world that turns its eyes to their neighborhood only when the racism they've witnessed for years has become violent.

For many Black people living here, the effects of discrimination have been felt much longer — and the violence represents a uniquely harrowing moment in a lengthy history of trauma.

"The pain is in our DNA at this point," said Earlene Patterson, 64, who bought milk and other food from the Tops grocery store days before the attack. "It's in my great-grandfather, my father. It's in me."

The suspect in the massacre, Payton S. Gendron, 18, embraced white supremacist ideas in a 180-page document posted online before the attack and named his top goal as killing as many Black people as possible, the authorities said. Mr. Gendron pleaded not guilty on Saturday night.

In the document, he said he would travel hours to Buffalo from the Southern Tier of New York. And while he wrote that he hoped for the toll to be much larger, the damage inflicted was immense.

"People are going to try to excuse it as this person not being from Buffalo — they'll say things like 'This is not who we are,'" said J Coley, a Ph.D. student and instructor in the University at Buffalo's sociology department. "I just want to be clear that this is exactly who Buffalo is. It doesn't matter that we have a Black mayor. This is still a place of anti-Black racism."

Buffalo has been marked by severe segregation for decades, offering an extreme example of the plight that Black people in many deeply divided urban centers have suffered. In 1991, one analysis found the Buffalo-Niagra Falls metro area was the fourth-most segregated in the United States; a study published two decades later found it ranked as the nation's sixth-most segregated.

Residents say the city is split into two vastly different worlds, the East and West Sides. About 85 percent of Black Buffalo residents live in East Buffalo, and researchers have mapped the effects of the split on nearly every aspect of life, including education, job opportunities, housing and even life expectancy, according to a [2018 report](#) from the Partnership for the Public Good.

Over the past three decades, living conditions for Black residents across several measures have improved little — and in some cases have worsened, according to a 2021 report by the [University at Buffalo](#). Black residents in Buffalo, for example, live an average of five fewer years than white residents. (Nationally, the gap between white and Black life spans [was 3.6 years](#), according to a 2018 study.)

The violence on Saturday played out against the backdrop of another visible sign of the area's struggles: About two blocks away from Tops is the Kensington Expressway, which was constructed during the nation's recovery from World War II and which cut directly through a Black neighborhood.

The expressway displaced residents, stifled economic development and dismantled what the 2018 report called one of the city's "greatest cultural assets": a tree-lined public space designed by [a renowned architect](#).

And so, as a neighborhood began to process the racist attack, longtime residents said it was tough to separate the recent burst of extreme violence from the decades of pain that preceded it. One sign placed next to a memorial of white candles and flower bouquets seemed to encapsulate the emotion: "There are no words for this heartache."

Some residents questioned whose lives were being safeguarded in Buffalo. Several reflected on aggressive encounters with Buffalo police officers. They said they believed that, unlike Mr. Gendron, a Black gunman would not have survived the attack.

Others worried that if the police increased their presence in the shooting's aftermath, it might only magnify the area's problems.

At rallies throughout Sunday afternoon, where neighbors waved the red, black and green Black liberation flag, many questioned why local politicians who they said had not previously prioritized their neighborhood were suddenly calling for change.

“I’m angry and I’m done; I’m tired of the political pandering,” said Taniqua Simmons, 47, who grew up on the East Side of Buffalo. “We have a lot of people who are speaking for us. We have a lot of people who are talking about us. But they’re not listening. And they’re not providing us with the legislation we need to thrive.”

She compared the neighborhood “to a power keg ready to explode” with the frustrations of residents.

The importance of the Tops grocery store to neighbors has compounded the distress. “It’s been a heart of the East Side,” said Charlene Caldwell, 55, picking up food on Sunday from volunteers, who had set up a [community fridge](#) in the store’s absence.

Some residents said that when the Tops on Jefferson Avenue [first opened in the neighborhood in 2003](#), they were frustrated that the grocery store was not Black-owned. Still, the market closed a wide void — and as the gunfire erupted, that chasm immediately broke back open.

On Sunday, the [supermarket chain said in a statement posted on social media](#) that the store would “remain closed until further notice.” But it added that “we are steadfast in our commitment to serving every corner of our community.”

Still, many said the indefinite loss of a neighborhood staple would ripple through the community long after the attention to Buffalo faded.

“The fact that it happened here dealt not just an emotional blow, but also an economic blow,” said Shango Oya, a resident of the neighborhood for more than a decade. “We’re in the heart of the inner city. This is the heart of Black folks. And if this doesn’t reopen, it’s going to kill the economics in this community — and the situation here is going to be even worse.”

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HEADLINE	<b>05/16 Europe unites in face of Putin’s ambitions</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/16/world/europe/nato-putin-sweden-finland.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/16/world/europe/nato-putin-sweden-finland.html</a>
GIST	<p>The decisions by Finland and Sweden to abandon the neutrality they adhered to for decades and apply to join NATO is the strongest indication yet of a profound change in Europe in the face of an aggressive Russian imperial project.</p> <p>The two Scandinavian states have in effect made clear that they expect the threat from President Vladimir V. Putin’s Russia to be enduring, that they will not be cowed by it, and that after <a href="#">the Russian butchery in Bucha</a>, Ukraine, there is no room for bystanders. Theirs is a declaration of Western resolve.</p> <p>“Military nonalignment has served Sweden well, but our conclusion is that it won’t serve us equally well in the future,” Sweden’s prime minister, Magdalena Andersson, said on Sunday. “This is not a decision to be taken lightly.”</p> <p>Because the Finnish and Swedish militaries are already well integrated with NATO, one reason <a href="#">the application process may go quickly</a>, the immediate impact of the countries’ change of strategic course in light of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine will be less practical than political.</p> <p>This is a new Europe in which there is no more in-between space. Countries are either protected by NATO or they are on their own against a Russia ruled by a man determined to assert Russia’s place on the world stage through force. For Sweden, and especially for Finland, with its 810-mile border with Russia, Mr. Putin’s decision to invade a neighbor could not be ignored.</p>

They were not alone. Germany, a generally pacifist nation since it emerged from the rubble of 1945, has embarked on a massive investment in its armed forces, as well as an attempt to wean itself of dependence on energy from a Russia it had judged as, if not innocuous, at least a reliable business partner.

“NATO enlargement was never a cause of Mr. Putin’s decision to invade Ukraine, but it is certainly a consequence,” said Nathalie Tocci, the director of the Institute for International Affairs in Rome. “Sweden and Finland now see a Russia that is revanchist and revisionist in a way that is much more dangerous than during the latter part of the Cold War.”

Sweden and Finland judged neutrality to be in their interests when faced by the Soviet threat, and in the Swedish case for centuries before that. They did not alter course, although they did join the European Union, in the more than three decades since the Cold War’s end.

The shift in sentiment in the two countries in the past several months has been dramatic, one measure of how Mr. Putin’s determination to push NATO back and weaken support for it has produced the opposite effect — the rebirth of an alliance that had been casting around for a generation for a convincing reason to exist.

Where no more than a quarter of the population in Sweden and Finland supported joining NATO last year, that number has risen sharply today — hitting 76 percent in a recent poll in Finland. Sweden’s governing Social Democratic Party, the country’s largest party and long a bastion of nonalignment, has embraced NATO membership in an extraordinary turnabout.

“Putin climbed into a tree and does not know how to get down,” said Nicole Bacharan, a French foreign policy analyst. “Now he will face a NATO that is stronger and bigger and more determined.”

Article 3 of NATO’s founding treaty says that members must “maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack” through “continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid.” In the case of Sweden and Finland, these capacities have already been extensively developed through close cooperation with NATO.

Carl Bildt, a former Swedish prime minister and foreign minister, said: “We were on a glide path to a closer relationship with NATO. But rocket fuel was given to that particular path on Feb. 24” — the date the Russian invasion of Ukraine began.

He added: “Our decision reflects the view that Russia will remain a complicated place for a long time, and the war in Ukraine will be fairly long, with an erratic and highly revisionist leadership in the Kremlin for the foreseeable future.”

Asked if Sweden feared retaliation from Russia, Mr. Bildt said “you never know with Russia, but the mood is fairly confident.”

The assessment that the Ukraine war may well be long is now widely shared in Europe. Mr. Putin did not only take on his neighbor; he took on the West and an America portrayed as an “empire of lies.”

It took about 20 years from the Versailles Treaty of 1919 for Germany to respond to perceived humiliation by sending the Third Reich’s war machine across its neighbors’ border, igniting World War II. It took about 30 years for Mr. Putin’s brooding resentment over the perceived humiliation of the breakup of the Soviet empire to lead to a full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

The Russian president seems unlikely to reverse course, even if his war has gone badly up to now.

In practice, both Finland and Sweden have lived for a long time with Russian nuclear weapons in nearby Kaliningrad, the Russian enclave sandwiched between Poland and Lithuania on the Baltic coast.

“These countries are used to Russian violations of their airspace, they know the risks are there,” Ms. Tocci said. “But the security gains with NATO are incomparably higher than any added risk.”

Still, Mr. Putin has alluded more than once to Russia’s sophisticated range of nuclear weapons, and suggested he would not hesitate to use them if provoked. That threat is there not only for Finland and Sweden as they abandon military nonalignment, but for all of Europe and beyond.

Ms. Tocci spoke during a visit to Estonia, one of the three Baltic states formerly part of the Soviet Union that joined NATO in 2004. “There is general delight here that the Baltic Sea will now be a NATO sea, and to Estonians, the Finnish and Swedish decisions feel like a vindication,” she said.

For a long time, even up to the eve of the Russian invasion, Europe has been divided. Countries close to the Russian border — like the Baltic states and Poland — took a Russian threat seriously from bitter historical experience, while countries farther west, including Germany and France, were more intent on enjoying the peace dividend of the Cold War’s end than looking Mr. Putin’s ambitions in the eye.

These illusions persisted even after Mr. Putin annexed Crimea in 2014, stirred up a war in the eastern Donbas region of Ukraine the same year, and used military force to win the endgame in Syria, using brutal methods honed in Chechnya many years earlier and evident since February in Ukraine.

In the end, the countries closest geographically to Russia, and most immediately threatened by it, were right. Finland and Sweden have witnessed that up close.

Europe is now largely united in its determination to resist Mr. Putin and ensure he does not win the war in Ukraine. The United States, which had its own Russian illusions, has refocused on Europe and is determined not only to save Ukraine but to weaken Russia. These are not short-term ambitions.

“We do have a changed Europe,” Mr. Bildt said. “We will have a stronger NATO, with defense spending up, politically more cohesive, with a sense of purpose. We will also get a stronger European Union, with more complementarity between it and NATO.”

Europe, of course, will also be challenged economically and otherwise by any long war. And the countries in between — essentially, Moldova and Georgia, stuck in a no-man’s land on the fringes of Russia without NATO protection — will face treacherous challenges.

Finland and Sweden learned one core lesson from Ukraine. After the NATO announcement in 2008 that Ukraine and Georgia “will become members of NATO,” a decision taken with scant consideration of how or when to achieve that objective, the thorny issue of Ukraine’s membership was left floating by Western leaders who did not want to provoke Mr. Putin further.

This made no difference to Mr. Putin’s calculus. He invaded Ukraine just the same, inventing a Nazi threat and arguing that Ukrainian statehood was a myth. Sweden and Finland were not going to suffer the same fate through misguided restraint. “They learned a lesson,” Ms. Tocci said.

The question remains of how Mr. Putin will get down from his tree. He called the Finnish decision “a mistake,” and insisted there was no Russian threat to the country. He also cut off Russian supplies of electricity to Finland. There is no sign of his abandoning his conviction that force will eventually deliver Russia’s strategic aims.

“Even if Putin realizes he made a mistake, I doubt he will ever admit it,” Mr. Bildt said. “The consequences would be too momentous. This was not a small mistake. It was a catastrophic strategic error of the first order.”

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HEADLINE	05/15 Military disaster pierces Russia info bubble
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/15/world/europe/pro-russian-war-bloggers-kremlin.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/15/world/europe/pro-russian-war-bloggers-kremlin.html</a>



The destruction wreaked on a Russian battalion as it tried to cross a river in northeastern Ukraine last week is emerging as among the deadliest engagements of the war, with estimates based on publicly available evidence now suggesting that well over 400 Russian soldiers were killed or wounded.

And as the scale of what happened comes into sharper focus, the disaster appears to be breaking through the Kremlin's tightly controlled information bubble.

Perhaps most striking, the Russian battlefield failure is resonating with a stable of pro-Russian war bloggers — some of whom are embedded with troops on the front line — who have reliably posted to the social network Telegram with claims of Russian success and Ukrainian cowardice.

“The commentary by these widely read milbloggers may fuel burgeoning doubts in Russia about Russia's prospects in this war and the competence of Russia's military leaders,” the Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based research body, wrote over the weekend.

On May 11, the Russian command reportedly sent about 550 troops of the 74th Motorized Rifle Brigade of the 41st Combined Arms Army to cross the Donets River at Bilohorivka, in the eastern Luhansk region, in a bid to encircle Ukrainian forces near Rubizhne.

Satellite images reveal that Ukrainian artillery destroyed several Russian pontoon bridges and laid waste to a tight concentration of Russian troops and equipment around the river.

The Institute for the Study of War, [citing analyses based on the publicly available imagery](#), indicated that there could have been as many as 485 Russian soldiers killed or wounded and more than 80 pieces of equipment destroyed.

As the news of the losses at the river crossing in Bilohorivka started to spread, some Russian bloggers did not appear to hold back in their criticism of what they said was incompetent leadership.

“I've been keeping quiet for a long time,” Yuri Podolyaka, a war blogger with 2.1 million followers on Telegram, said in a video [posted](#) on Friday, saying that he had avoided criticizing the Russian military until now.

“The last straw that overwhelmed my patience was the events around Bilohorivka, where due to stupidity — I emphasize, because of the stupidity of the Russian command — at least one battalion tactical group was burned, possibly two.”

Mr. Podolyaka ridiculed the Kremlin line that the war is going “according to plan.” He told his viewers in a five-minute video that, in fact, the Russian Army was short of functional unmanned drones, night-vision equipment and other kit “that is catastrophically lacking on the front.”

“Yes, I understand that it's impossible for there to be no problems in war,” he said. “But when the same problems go on for three months, and nothing seems to be changing, then I personally and in fact millions of citizens of the Russian Federation start to have questions for these leaders of the military operation.”

Another popular blogger, who goes by Starshe Eddy on Telegram, [wrote](#) that the fact that commanders left so much of their force exposed amounted to “not idiocy, but direct sabotage.”

And a third, Vladlen Tatarski, [posted](#) that Russia's eastern offensive was moving slowly not just because of a lack of surveillance drones but also “these generals” and their tactics.

“Until we get the last name of the military genius who laid down a B.T.G. by the river and he answers for it publicly, we won't have had any military reforms,” Mr. Tatarski wrote.

	<p>Western military analysts have also pored over the imagery and say the attempted crossing demonstrated a stunning lack of tactical sense.</p> <p>They have speculated that Russian commanders, desperate to make progress, rushed the operation. Some also suggested that it was a reflection of disorder in the Russian ranks.</p> <p>If the estimates that hundreds of soldiers were killed or injured prove accurate, it would be one of the deadliest known engagements of the war.</p> <p>There were more than <a href="#">500 sailors aboard the Russian Black Sea flagship Moskva</a> when it was struck by a Ukrainian missile in April. The Kremlin at first insisted that all the sailors were rescued, later saying one was killed. But even as the families of missing sailors have publicly demanded answers, the Kremlin has largely kept up <a href="#">an official silence</a> on the fate of the crew, part of a larger campaign to suppress bad news.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/15 Sweden, Finland favor joining NATO</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/15/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#finland-sweden-nato-russia-ukraine">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/15/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#finland-sweden-nato-russia-ukraine</a>
GIST	<p>BERLIN — The head of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization said Sunday that the security bloc would grant fast-track membership to Sweden and Finland, raising the pressure on Vladimir V. Putin, who justified his invasion of Ukraine by what he cast as the need to keep the military alliance away from Russia’s borders.</p> <p>“President Putin wants Ukraine defeated, NATO down, North America and Europe divided,” the NATO secretary general, Jens Stoltenberg, said in Berlin after meeting the foreign ministers of the alliance’s members. “But Ukraine stands, NATO is stronger than ever, Europe and North America are solidly united.”</p> <p>Both countries said their applications were imminent. Finland’s Parliament is expected to ratify a NATO application on Monday. And Sweden’s governing <a href="#">Social Democratic Party</a> said Sunday that it would vote in favor of joining NATO — all but guaranteeing that the Nordic nation would end 200 years of neutrality.</p> <p>The possibility of NATO troops deploying along Russia’s 810-mile border with Finland comes as Mr. Putin is facing notable setbacks in the war he began in Ukraine nearly three months ago.</p> <p>Ukrainian forces have advanced to near the Russian border in recent days after pushing Russian troops from the outskirts of Kharkiv, Ukraine’s second-largest city. And evidence mounted on Sunday that Russia’s offensive in the Donbas region further east is faltering after the initial modest gains.</p> <p>Estimates <a href="#">based on publicly available evidence</a> suggest that well over 400 Russian soldiers were killed or wounded as they <a href="#">tried to cross the Donets River</a> at the village of Bilohorivka, in the eastern Luhansk region, in a bid to encircle Ukrainian forces. The debacle is likely to have been one of the bloodiest engagements since the start of the war, leading even influential pro-Russian bloggers to begin to voice concern, despite the Kremlin’s efforts to criminalize dissent.</p> <p>“I’ve been keeping quiet for a long time,” Yuri Podolyaka, a war blogger with 2.1 million followers on the messaging app Telegram, said in a video <a href="#">posted</a> on Friday, saying he had avoided criticizing the Russian military.</p> <p>“The last straw that overwhelmed my patience,” he said, “was the events around Bilohorivka, where due to stupidity — I emphasize, because of the stupidity of the Russian command — at least one battalion tactical group was burned, possibly two.”</p> <p>British intelligence officials <a href="#">said Sunday</a> that Russia had lost a third of the ground forces it had committed to the Ukraine offensive. The rate of attrition, if confirmed, would make it extremely difficult for Russia to</p>

achieve a decisive victory against a well-motivated and increasingly well-armed and trained enemy, according to analysts.

But within Russia, the Kremlin's propaganda and repression of independent media have effectively shielded the majority of the population from the true human cost of the war. The Russian government's emergency economic measures have thus far blunted the impact of sanctions.

Western and Ukrainian officials say that thousands of Russian soldiers have already died in the conflict. But reports about deaths have been heavily censored by the state and concentrated among working-class families spread across the world's largest country, precluding local tragedies from coalescing into national grieving.

Many Russians believe the war is no longer against Ukraine, but has morphed into a proxy conflict with the United States and NATO, who, they say, are exploiting the conflict to destroy their nation, according to interviews with a half-dozen residents in Moscow and in provincial Siberia.

If pushed into a corner, Russia will always fight on, some of them said, even if it risks provoking a nuclear war.

The decision of Finland and Sweden to apply to join NATO has only played into the siege narrative pushed by the Kremlin, tapping into patriotic feelings in a nation that prides itself on coming together to repel foreign threats over the centuries.

For their part, both Nordic states have long been wary of Russian power.

Finland was part of the Russian Empire and fought to maintain its independence from the Soviet Union during the Second World War. Sweden and Russia fought to dominate Eastern Europe in the 18th century.

But Finland and Sweden both remained neutral after the Soviet Union confronted the United States and its allies in the aftermath of the Second World War. The end of that neutrality is a striking sign of the extent to which Mr. Putin's strategic calculation in Ukraine has backfired and undermined longstanding Russian security priorities.

As a rationale for his invasion of Ukraine, Mr. Putin had said he was concerned about NATO enlargement, and in particular the deployment of new missiles near the Russian borders. This concern is shared by the majority of Russian citizens, who believe the United States has taken advantage of their country's weakness after the collapse of the Soviet Union to bring missiles to its borders.

An application to join NATO must be unanimously approved by its 30 members. One of those members, Turkey, has raised issues over the pending applications, though it has suggested it would not oppose admission if its own security concerns are addressed.

Antony J. Blinken, the American secretary of state, said after the Berlin meetings on Sunday that there was strong support among current NATO members on bringing the two Nordic states into the alliance. U.S. officials said their application processes should be completed in months, and Germany's foreign minister, Annalena Baerbock, said Sunday that her nation would be among the first to ratify them.

The Baltic States joined NATO in 2004, bringing the alliance to the border with the Russian heartland. And in 2008, President George W. Bush promised that Ukraine and Georgia could enter NATO and pushed the alliance to make similar statements.

Western European nations, however, were reluctant to make good on that promise. Before the war, both the United States and European allies had said that Ukraine would not be qualified to enter NATO anytime soon.

	<p>After Russia invaded, Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelensky, pushed for the Western powers to act on his government's desire to enter NATO, but has since said he would be more open to a neutral Ukraine if its security is guaranteed.</p> <p>On Sunday morning, Mr. Blinken met in Berlin with Dmytro Kuleba, the foreign minister of Ukraine, to discuss the war. The State Department said the two men discussed the details of further American security assistance to Ukraine.</p> <p>Mr. Kuleba posted on Twitter a photo of the two standing in a room and smiling. "More weapons and other aid is on the way to Ukraine," he wrote.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/15 Business travel returns albeit unevenly</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/15/business/business-travel.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/15/business/business-travel.html</a>
GIST	<p>Business travel appears to be returning, albeit unevenly, after all but disappearing for most of the pandemic.</p> <p>Despite early predictions that <a href="#">Zoom meetings would supplant face-to-face encounters</a> even after the coronavirus had receded, industry trade groups and hotel companies are pointing to significant upswings in small business meetings as well as larger conventions and trade shows in the last couple of months. Airlines also say bookings by business travelers have recently jumped.</p> <p>What is not returning so quickly, executives and experts say, are business trips by individuals. Some employers continue to set limits on travel. In other cases, because of Covid restrictions, visitors are not allowed in the offices of the people they want to see.</p> <p>And reflecting the disparate pace of the recovery, domestic business travel has returned faster than international, and travel to and from Europe has had a bigger rebound than Asia bookings.</p> <p>Even within the United States, the strength of the return of business travel depends on the destination.</p> <p>In Las Vegas, the number of trade shows and events scheduled is actually higher this year than in 2019. But, said Steve Hill, president and chief executive of the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, attendance is projected to be only 60 to 65 percent of the prepandemic level. In New York, the city's tourism promotion body forecasts that business travel will not exceed 2019 levels until 2025.</p> <p>Henry Harteveldt, a travel industry analyst for Atmosphere Research, pointed to data on worldwide airline ticket sales that "shows a steady increase in the number of business travel tickets being issued." That, he said, is "concrete evidence that the rebound in business travel is underway."</p> <p>Yet for all the positive signs that business travel is taking root again, Russia's war in Ukraine, China's "zero Covid" lockdowns and the unpredictable path of the pandemic all threaten to stifle a widespread return to 2019 levels from happening anytime soon.</p> <p>Robert Crandall, the former president and chairman of American Airlines, said that the war in Ukraine could have significant consequences on the global economy. "People want to feel safe," he said. "This will make them feel less safe, which will have an adverse impact on travel."</p> <p>Mr. Harteveldt was more optimistic about the prospects for business travel. "If developed countries' economies remain strong and the war in Ukraine doesn't spread, then the business travel industry will have a good fall and winter," he said, "and 2023 will be a good, possibly great, year for it."</p> <p>The renewed hope contrasts sharply with the mood two years ago, after most business trips were abruptly canceled or suspended. The U.S. Travel Association, a trade group, said that in 2020, domestic business</p>

travel spending was down 68 percent from 2019 levels. And while the spending grew in 2021, the group said, it was still about half of what it was in 2019.

But by last month, Suzanne Neufang, chief executive of the Global Business Travel Association, said, the association was seeing “significant gains in the return of business travel, especially over the past month or two.”

One active business traveler is Jonathan Adkins, executive director of the Governors Highway Safety Association in Washington, who has been traveling extensively since last July for conventions, trade shows and speaking engagements.

He has 11 trips planned between now and the end of September, which, he said, “feels like a lot, more now than what I did before the pandemic, in part because I want to meet with partners and people whom I haven’t seen in two and a half years.”

He added, “We’re catching up.”

In recent earnings calls, the major U.S. airlines all reported upticks in their business travel bookings. American Airlines, for one, said its business demand had already recovered to 80 percent of 2019 levels.

United said that its business travel bookings were “rapidly returning,” but that they had not fully recovered. It also said it was finding no “meaningful recovery in business traffic” in Asia, where strict coronavirus restrictions are still in place in countries like China and Japan.

Delta Air Lines reported that its domestic premium revenues in March were “100 percent restored to March 2019 levels,” with business travel reaching its highest levels since the pandemic started.

And all the major airlines reported that they were able to raise fares to cover higher fuel costs without diminishing the appetite for travel.

Similarly, hotel companies reported that even though they raised room rates, demand was strong, including from business travelers. Jeff Doane, chief commercial officer for North and Central America for the hotel company Accor, said last month that the company was seeing “exponential growth in business travel year over year, well outpacing expectations for 2022.”

Hilton said on an earnings call this month that it expected individual business travel “to be roughly back to 2019 levels by year end” and that it was forecasting that demand for company meetings and convention business would accelerate in the second half of the year.

And Marriott said on its earnings call this month that the number of room nights booked by individual business travelers in the United States and Canada was down 10 to 15 percent in March compared with 2019 levels, “obviously a very meaningful improvement over what we saw in the fourth quarter,” when they were down about 30 percent.

“The volume coming out of small- and medium-sized companies has effectively fully recovered, while the demand from larger companies still has a bit of the hill to climb,” it said.

In a report last month, the American Hotel and Lodging Association and Kalibri Labs, which evaluates and predicts hotels’ revenue performance, said they found that urban markets were being “disproportionately impacted by the pandemic,” noting that the markets hit hardest by a decline in business travel revenue were San Francisco, New York and Washington, D.C., with projected decreases of 69 percent, 55 percent and 54 percent.

Jan Freitag, national director for hospitality market analytics at the research firm CoStar Group, said the pandemic hit large, urban, downtown convention hotels “extremely hard.”

Chip Rogers, president and chief executive of the hotel association, was only partly joking when he said that the three biggest challenges facing the lodging industry were “staffing, staffing and staffing.”

The labor shortage at hotels has affected business travelers’ stays almost since the start of the pandemic. Jobs at hotel front desks, hotel bars and restaurants, and housekeeping departments have been cut radically. All but the most luxurious hotels generally no longer clean guest rooms daily, instead offering only fresh towels and garbage removal. Many hotel bars and restaurants have shut down or offer only limited service, and technology has replaced many transactions that once involved human beings, such as front-desk check-in, bill payment and room-key delivery. Robots for housekeeping and other services, which had been introduced before the pandemic, have become more prevalent.

Ron Hernandez, who lives in New Orleans and is a clinical applications trainer for a biomedical company, said he stopped his business travels only during the first seven weeks of the pandemic in 2020. Since then, he has been traveling regularly domestically.

He said that he has found that prices of all travel services — including flights, hotel stays and car rentals — are climbing, and that many hotels that once offered restaurant and 24-hour airport shuttle services no longer do. He said airlines are only now gradually reinstituting first-class services, such as a drink before departure.

But the cuts in services and the higher costs did not deter him, he said, because he can’t work remotely or by Zoom. “I have to be out in the field constantly,” he said.

But business travel is evolving. Mr. Harteveldt, the analyst for Atmosphere Research, said business travelers “are more likely to view themselves as free agents” and “less likely to be loyal to a hotel brand or an airline than they were prepandemic,” partly because of changes to loyalty programs that have made them more complicated to use and less valuable to consumers.

Mike Janssen, global chief operating officer and chief commercial officer of BCD Travel, said that with the increase in remote work, a “business trip” now often means an internal meeting at a company’s “head office, at a conveniently located office or an off site.”

Some travel experts question how much, if at all, individual business trips will recover. Michael Derchin, a self-employed airline analyst, said that while small and medium-size businesses will continue to send employees on the road to meet customers face to face, “a substantial portion of the employees of large corporations will not travel permanently again,” as the companies focus on productivity and cost savings.

Still, after more than two years of remote work and meetings for many people, Evan Konwiser, executive vice president of product and strategy for American Express Global Business Travel, said he believed most travelers were “happy to be back on the road to see and meet with their colleagues and customers in person.”

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HEADLINE	05/14 ‘Unequal burden’: working with long Covid
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/14/business/dealbook/working-with-long-covid.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/14/business/dealbook/working-with-long-covid.html</a>
GIST	<p>After graduating in the spring of 2020, Clare Banaszewski landed her dream job as a nurse practitioner in a maternity ward at a hospital in Omaha.</p> <p>That winter, Ms. Banaszewski, 24, contracted the coronavirus. It was a mild case, and she bounced back after two weeks. But it wasn’t long before she started feeling new symptoms: She was overcome with fatigue, struggling to make it through her 12-hour shifts, which used to fly by. She felt heart palpitations, suffered from cognitive problems and had severe headaches — telltale symptoms of a condition known as “long Covid.”</p> <p>She took three months of medical leave and started back with shortened, six-hour shifts. Even those were too much. Her manager was understanding, but she eventually told Ms. Banaszewski that the</p>



hospital would need to hire a replacement. Ms. Banaszewski resigned six months ago. She has been unemployed since.

“It’s scary,” she said. “I have a lot of student loans I’m trying to figure out how I’m going to pay off. I don’t really have much to fall back on.”

Ms. Banaszewski is one of at least seven million people in the United States, [by one estimate](#), who are unable to work full time or who have had to scale back their work because of long Covid, which is defined as when Covid symptoms persist weeks, months or even years after the initial onset of an infection.

### **Upended careers**

Some research has shown that lingering Covid symptoms are more prevalent in people in their 30s and 40s — when workers are often in the prime of their careers. That’s according to a British government study, which was published this month, that found that the ailment was also most prevalent in women, people living in deprived areas and those working in social care, teaching or health care or having another disability.

“We’ve got to, as a nation, recognize that the majority of people will be of working age, and we need to facilitate these guys working in an environment that allows them to recover while working,” said Dr. Fauzia Begum, an occupational health doctor for Britain’s National Health Service and the medical head of a countywide long Covid program in Derbyshire, England. “If you don’t do that, you end up in a position where you have a lot of people who are off work.”

Dr. Begum and her colleagues have seen firsthand how patients who overexert themselves in the early stages of recovery can end up prolonging their symptoms.

Nisa Malli, a labor researcher who has long Covid, said she returned to work too soon and later needed to take off a long period to recover. Ms. Malli, who said she feels 90 percent better two years after contracting the virus, added that she was lucky that her employer allowed her to work remotely and offered a phased return to work.

Other types of workers, however, such as chefs who lost their sense of smell or software developers who could not remember codes they wrote before they were sick, may have to change careers and need support for retraining programs, said Ms. Malli, a member of the Patient-Led Research Collaborative, a group of long Covid patients who are researching the disease.

The key difference between long Covid and other disabilities is that the virus is airborne and transmitted in the workplace and during commutes, Ms. Malli said. It is also different because of the numbers of people it has affected. “We’ve never had a post-viral illness at this scale, where a medium-sized employer is going to see multiple workers getting Covid initially and have long-term complications.”

A study published in January by the Brookings Institution found that long Covid could account for 15 percent of the millions of unfilled jobs in the United States.

Lucy Bailey, a 34-year-old with long Covid, said she felt as if she was trying to figure out her career options without any support.

She has found some solace in online support groups that connect her with others who are trying to navigate recovery and career changes, she said.

“I drop a lot of balls all the time that I never used to,” said Ms. Bailey, whose work as a campaigns coordinator for a charity in London was not renewed last year after her contract ended. “I don’t really know where to go next. I can’t do the jobs I loved before.”

### **‘Another unequal burden’**

Some countries in Western Europe have robust policies to protect those with disabilities, said Philippa Dunne, one of the authors of a report published by the Solve Long Covid Initiative, a nonprofit research and advocacy group.

In the United States, however, there are fewer protections. Since people who are unvaccinated may be at a higher risk for developing long Covid, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, companies in regions with low vaccination rates, like the South, may have more worker shortages than those in regions with higher vaccination rates, Ms. Dunne said.

“It’s going to be another unequal burden,” Ms. Dunne said. “The South already has a much higher rate of people on disability than the Northeast and the Midwest. That also is going to be made worse.”

A major logistical hurdle in the United States for employees with [long Covid](#) is qualifying for unemployment benefits. There is no single test for diagnosing it, and it is only vaguely defined, with so much still unknown. That can make it harder for people to be diagnosed and [gain access to disability benefits](#). It can also complicate responses from employers, who are still navigating how to handle coronavirus-related work issues, including the fraught issue of whether Covid vaccinations should be mandatory for workers.

Katie Brennan, an adviser for the Society for Human Resource Management, said employers must consider their legal obligations to employees under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act and the Americans With Disabilities Act. With F.M.L.A., eligible employees are entitled up to 12 weeks off, and state protections may also be in place, she said.

Beyond the legal guidelines, companies can support and retain employees with long Covid by providing flexibility and a [gradual return to work option](#). It’s crucial that people with long Covid [avoid returning to work](#) without the adjustments they need to manage fatigue, according to a guide by the Royal College of Occupational Therapists.

According to guidelines published by the European Union’s workplace safety agency, “returning to work too soon or to a full workload can cause relapse.” Some employees may feel guilty and find it hard to take a break when they need to, the agency’s guidelines say. Encourage them to rest and recuperate, and focus on asking about their health rather than when they will be returning.

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HEADLINE	05/16 Day 82 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/16/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-82-of-the-invasion">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/16/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-82-of-the-invasion</a>
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Sweden has indicated it will follow Finland in applying for Nato membership.</b> The two countries’ move abandons decades of military non-alignment triggered by Russia’s invasion of <a href="#">Ukraine</a> and would redraw the security map of Europe.</li><li>• Nato chief Jens Stoltenberg said <b>the alliance would look to provide both countries with interim security guarantees</b> while the applications are processed, including possibly by increasing troops in the region.</li><li>• In apparent retaliation, <b>the Kremlin has pulled the plug on electricity supplies to Finland</b>, with which it shares a 1,300km (800 mile) border.</li><li>• <b>Nato pledged open-ended military support for Ukraine</b> on Sunday. At a meeting of alliance foreign ministers in Berlin, Germany’s Annalena Baerbock said it would provide military assistance “for as long as Ukraine needs this support for the self-defence of its country”.</li><li>• <b>British intelligence revealed that Russia may have lost as much as a third of the invasion force</b>, as more than 400 Russian soldiers <a href="#">were estimated</a> to have been killed or wounded last week trying to cross the Donets river. UK defence chiefs said Russia’s offensive in the eastern Donbas region had “lost momentum” and that Moscow’s battle plan was “significantly behind schedule”.</li><li>• <b>Ukraine’s president Volodymyr Zelensky has warned that the military situation in Ukraine’s south-eastern Donbas region is “very difficult”</b> as analysts say Russian president Vladimir Putin has his sights on annexing southern and eastern Ukraine in the months ahead.</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Russia’s defence ministry claimed it had carried out “high-precision” missile strikes</b> on four artillery munitions depots in the Donetsk area in the east of Ukraine. The ministry also claimed airstrikes had destroyed two missile-launching systems and radar, and 15 Ukrainian drones around Donetsk and Lugansk.</li> <li>• As Russian forces struggle in Ukraine, Ukrainian forces made inroads. <b>The first Ukrainian battalion reached the Russian border</b> in the Kharkhiv region today.</li> <li>• <b>Ukrainian authorities are conducting at least 10 active rape investigations involving Russian troops</b>, and are calling for other victims to come forward.</li> <li>• <b>Kalush Orchestra, the band that won Eurovision last night for Ukraine, is auctioning off the statuette</b> to raise funds for the Ukrainian army and Ukraine. The win has lifted spirits around Ukraine.</li> <li>• <b>Zelenskiy has warned that the war in his country risks triggering global food shortages</b> and has urged international intervention to prevent global famine. Before the invasion, Ukraine supplied 12% of the planet’s wheat, 15% of its corn and half of its sunflower oil.</li> <li>• <b>A cyberattack on the Lviv city council website</b> resulted in stolen data that ended up published in Telegram channels linked to Russia. This happened the same weekend Italian police thwarted hacker attacks by pro-Russian groups on the Eurovision song contest.</li> </ul>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/15 More bird flu cases confirmed in WA</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/state/washington/article261430597.html">https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/state/washington/article261430597.html</a>
GIST	<p>OLYMPIA, WASH. Additional cases of bird flu have been confirmed with the most recent in Whatcom and Okanogan counties, Washington state agricultural officials said Friday.</p> <p>The cases were confirmed Thursday in non-commercial backyard flocks, the state Department of Agriculture said in a statement.</p> <p>Flock owners contacted the state’s sick bird hotline to report an unusual number of sudden deaths and sickness in their flocks. The flocks, one with around 100 chickens and the other with nearly 30 chicken, ducks, and geese, are quarantined and will be euthanized, the statement said.</p> <p>Cases of avian flu were also confirmed in backyard flocks in Spokane County earlier this week and last week in Pacific County. Agriculture Department spokesperson Amber Betts said other cases also have been confirmed in Pierce and Clallam counties.</p> <p>The latest outbreak of avian flu hit North America in December and has led to the culling of about 37 million chickens and turkeys in U.S. farms since February. More than 35 million birds in flocks across 30 states have been affected.</p> <p>State officials say reducing or eliminating contact between wild birds and domestic flocks is a key way to protect domestic birds from bird flu. Bird owners should bring their flocks inside or undercover to protect them from wild waterfowl, officials said.</p> <p>“If flock owners could remain diligent for just a few weeks until the waterfowl complete their migration north, we are hopeful we can get through the worst of it with lower impact,” Dr. Amber Itle, Washington state veterinarian, said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/13 All those quitters? They’re at work</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/13/business/great-resignation-jobs.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/13/business/great-resignation-jobs.html</a>
GIST	<p>If Applebee’s were the solar system — and for nearly six years, to Nick Haner, it felt that way — the customer would have been the sun. Everything revolved around the customer. The customer was always right, he was told. Even when the customer spit in Haner’s face. Even when the customer screamed that her salad should have been served hot, not cold. Even when the customer ripped his \$2 tip in half.</p>

But something happened last year to shift that orbit. It started with the signs Haner saw popping up in windows as he drove to work: “Now hiring!” McDonald’s was hiring. Walgreens was hiring. Taco Bell closed early because it was short staffed. Everyone in Midland, Michigan, it seemed, needed workers. So Haner began to wonder: Why shouldn’t work revolve around people like him?

“It’s absolute craziness,” said Haner, 32, who quit his job at Applebee’s last summer and accepted a fully remote position in sales at a tech company. “I decided to take a chance because I was like, ‘If it doesn’t work out, there’s 100 more jobs out there that I can find.’”

More than 40 million people left their jobs last year, many in retail and hospitality. It was called the Great Resignation, and then a rush of other names: the Great Renegotiation, the Great Reshuffle, the Great Rethink. But people were not leaving work altogether. They still had to make money. Much of the pandemic stimulus aid stopped by the fall, and savings rates dropped to their lowest in nine years, 6.4%, by January. What workers realized, though, is that they could find better ways to earn a living. Higher pay. Stable hours. Flexibility. They expected more from their employers, and appeared to be getting it.

Applebee’s said the safety of its workers and guests was a priority. “Aggressive behavior of any kind is not permitted,” said Kevin Carroll, the company’s chief operations officer.

Across the country, workers were flush with opportunities and could rebuff what they had once been forced to tolerate — whether rigid bosses or customer abuse. And to keep businesses running, bosses had to start listening.

“People have seen this as a rejection of work, but I’ve seen it as people capitalizing on an abundance of job opportunities,” said Nick Bunker, director of economic research for North America at Indeed’s hiring lab. “People do need to pay the bills.”

As vaccines and stimulus money rolled out last year, and state and local governments urged a return to normalcy, businesses grew desperate for workers. Workers took advantage of the moment by recalibrating what they expected from their employers. That did not mean millions logging off forever and throwing their laptops into the sea. It meant low-wage workers hanging up their aprons and driving to another business with a “hiring” sign hanging on the door. It also meant white-collar workers, buoyed by the tight labor market, telling their employers exactly how and where they want to work.

“Our employees have the power,” said Tim Ryan, U.S. chair of PwC, which is in the midst of a three-year transition that allows for more flexible work, including allowing much of the workforce to go permanently remote, a process Ryan estimates to be a \$2.4 billion investment.

That workplace transition is so grand that the executive of the 55,000-employee company had to describe it with a 2003 Disney reference.

“There’s a line in ‘Pirates of the Caribbean’ — I have six children — where one of the characters says to Elizabeth, ‘Do you believe in nightmares? You better, because we’re living in one,’” Ryan continued, with impressive but slightly off recall of Capt. Hector Barbossa’s dialogue about ghost stories. “We’re living in this amazing transformation of the workplace, and we don’t even know it because we’re showing up every day living in it.”

Many of last year’s job quitters are actually job swappers, according to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the census, which shows a nearly 1-to-1 correlation between the rate of quitting and swapping. Those job switchers have tended to be in leisure, hospitality and retail. In leisure and hospitality, the rate of workers quitting rose to nearly 6% from 4% since the pandemic began. In retail it jumped to nearly 5% from 3.5%. White-collar employers still struggled to hire, but they saw far fewer resignations. The quitting rate in finance, for example, declined at the start of the pandemic and is now just below 2%, and in media and technology it stayed roughly consistent, also below 2%.

When workers switched jobs, they often increased their pay. Wages grew nearly 10% in leisure and hospitality over the last year, and more than 7% in retail. Workers were also able to increase their shift hours, as rates of those working part-time involuntarily declined.

A slim share of people left the workforce entirely, though for the most part that was driven by older men retiring before age 65 — and some of them are now coming back to work. The mismatch between the baby boomers retiring and the smaller cohort of young people entering the workforce has also contributed to tightening labor supply. But broadly speaking, people are not done with work, and cannot afford to be. The last year brought less giving up and more trading up — to new jobs, more hours and better pay.

Workers did not really change their feelings about work; they changed their expectations. “Most people have never wanted to work and they do so because they need to live,” said Rebecca Givan, an associate professor of labor studies at Rutgers. “Now workers are saying, ‘We’re going to hold our bosses accountable and demand more from them.’”

Porsha Sharon, 28, still thinks about the outbursts she witnessed from customers she served last year at Buddy’s Pizza in Troy, Michigan. One woman entered the restaurant and simply ordered a pizza, to which Sharon responded, gesturing at the extensive menu: Which kind?

“Did you not hear what I said?” the customer replied, according to Sharon’s recollection. “Are you dense?”

Other customers mocked Sharon for wearing a mask. The eight-hour shifts ended with burning pain in her swollen feet. She got an offer in March to start working as an administrative assistant at a law firm, work she did on a temporary basis in college, and last month she quit the pizzeria.

“The last generation, they were miserable in their jobs but they stayed because that’s what they were supposed to do,” Sharon said. “We’re not like that, and I love that for us. We’re like, ‘This job is overworking me, I’m getting sick because my body is shutting down, and I’m over it.’”

Katy Dean, chief operating officer of Buddy’s Pizza, a Michigan restaurant chain, said abusive customers were a “challenging component” of the current climate in food service. “If a guest refuses to calm down and treat our staff with respect, we empower our managers to ask that guest to leave the restaurant,” Dean said.

This workplace moment has been branded one of anti-ambition. But for many workers, frustration gave way to an explosion of ambitious calls for better jobs: for promotions, industry switches, stable hours, sick leave, bereavement leave, maternity leave, retirement plans, safety protections, vacation time. “No one wants to work anymore,” read a sign outside of McDonald’s featured in a viral TikTok. To which former Secretary of Labor Robert Reich replied, “No one wants to be exploited anymore.”

Last year when millions said “I quit,” the reckoning reached far beyond the confines of the companies and industries at its center. White-collar workers were not quitting jobs at the same rapid clip as those in hospitality and retail. But they made bold demands of their employers all the same, cognizant that unemployment is low and competition for talent is fierce.

“There’s the threat of quitting rather than actual quitting,” Bunker said. “Employees realize they do have bargaining power.”

They are exercising that power, in particular, where it comes to flexibility. The shutdown of offices left workers with a sense of autonomy they were not willing to relinquish. Even some of the seemingly unassailable bosses on Wall Street recognized that old norms could not hold. Citigroup, Wells Fargo and BNY Mellon, for example, told bankers that their return to the office would be hybrid, and would not mean commuting five days a week.

Just 8% of Manhattan office workers are back in the office five days a week, according to data released this week from the Partnership for New York City.

“My quality of life increased so much that there would be no convincing me coming into an office was worth it,” said Lyssa Walker White, 38, who switched nonprofit jobs earlier this year because of her old employer’s expectation that she return to the office.

Some employers went ahead with calling their workers back to the office, at least for some of the week, and found that they faced outright resistance. Apple, for example, which required its employees to return to the office three days a week, received a recent open letter from workers detailing their fierce opposition to in-person work.

“Stop trying to control how often you can see us in the office,” the Apple workers wrote. “Please get out of our way, there is no one-size-fits-all solution, let us decide how we work best, and let us do the best work of our lives.”

The company declined to comment. Its hybrid RTO requirement remains in place.

At other white-collar workplaces, newly formed unions took up the remote work cause. The Nonprofit Professional Employees Union, for example, grew its membership from 12 organizations and 300 workers in 2018 to roughly 50 organizations and 1,300 workers this year. One member organization secured an agreement that managers would cover the costs of travel for workers required to commute. Another got its management to agree to provide written justification to any employee required to return to the office.

At a recent industry conference, Jessica Kriegel, head of people and culture at Experience.com, a technology company, gathered with colleagues in human resources and swapped all kinds of stories about facing the requests of an emboldened staff. There were tales of people asking for raises quadruple the size of their salaries. There were tales of company strategy meetings that had once been held as closed-door retreats in Napa, California, and had now been expanded to include junior level staff in town halls.

Kriegel said she had given a top performer an eye-popping raise, and seen another race through three promotions, rising from a contributor to a director to a vice president, in just one year.

“They’re asking for title bumps not even associated with financial promotions in order to put it on their LinkedIn,” Kriegel said. “People who are entry level are getting the director level title.”

So the human resources director raises an eyebrow when she hears colleagues say that people are over working, because she is watching her staff agitate for exactly the type of work they want to do. “We’re starting to see people feel they don’t have to live in fear,” she said. “It’s not about anti-ambition. It’s about incredible ambition.”

Haner, who left Applebee’s, was recently given a raise, of 16%, putting him at an hourly pay substantially above his wages at Applebee’s. When friends ask about his new job, he waxes on about the thoughtful conversations he has with his manager. When he requested time off for his grandfather’s funeral, something he felt would have prompted a “tsk, tsk” at Applebee’s, he was told that his company offers bereavement leave.

While a job is still a job, his morning alarm no longer prompts that sense of dread because of a new sensation: “They treat us with respect.”

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HEADLINE	05/15 Unusually wet, cold spring for Seattle
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/weather/unusually-wet-cold-spring-may-persist-in-seattle/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/weather/unusually-wet-cold-spring-may-persist-in-seattle/</a>
GIST	For those hoping to break out the shorts any time soon, weather forecasters have some bad news.



	<p>A cool trough of low pressure continues to draw storm systems through the region, with rain expected Sunday and much of the coming work week.</p> <p>“We’ve been stuck in the same pattern during the last couple weeks,” said Samantha Borth, a meteorologist at the Seattle office of the National Weather Service.</p> <p>Seattle’s rainfall in May totaled 2.3 inches through Saturday, marking the “fourth wettest first two weeks of May in 78 years,” the weather service tweeted.</p> <p>While Saturday’s temperature broke 60 degrees, ending a nine-day streak in the 50s, the region remains cool: “We may still trend below normal for at least the early half of the week,” Borth said.</p> <p>Forecasters expect showers on Monday and Tuesday, with some chance of clearing at times. Then, another storm system is on the radar, likely bringing rain Wednesday and into Thursday.</p> <p>The first chance of significant clearing will come Friday, Borth said. But she added that the National Weather Service’s Climate Prediction Center is showing below-normal temperatures and above-average rainfall for the next eight to 14 days.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/15 Hard at work: wildfire season preparations</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/tech/science/environment/state-department-natural-resources-national-guard-wildfire-season/281-bf97f958-60a6-468c-9451-f52da18af975">https://www.king5.com/article/tech/science/environment/state-department-natural-resources-national-guard-wildfire-season/281-bf97f958-60a6-468c-9451-f52da18af975</a>
GIST	<p>JOINT BASE LEWIS-MCCHORD, Wash. — More than 100 Washington National Guard soldiers and airmen participated in live training and red card certification testing Sunday as part of a partnership between the Washington National Guard and Washington State Department of Natural Resources.</p> <p>"We've got them digging line, we've got them putting up fire shelters, we've got them working pumps, and this is a combination of an extensive virtual process including 50 hours of classroom activity; this is their final practical exam." WADNR Wildfire Communications Manager Thomas Kyle-Milward said.</p> <p>WADNR and the WNG began teaming up in 2013 to prepare guard members for potential fire-related activations. Since 2014, more than 4,000 members have deployed to support firefighting efforts.</p> <p>"The Guard is an invaluable resource for DNR because they give us an extra layer of power, they give us an extra layer of resources," Kyle-Milward said.</p> <p>Each guard member has a unique background, and a reason they're passionate to serve.</p> <p>"I'm a student at UW so I don't get a lot of time between my family and homework and everything to be able to volunteer," Sgt. Jeffrey DeRouen said. "Summers are a free time and we tend to have problems with fire so it's nice to be able to step into that role."</p> <p>WADNR says conditions for this fire season look a little better than they did over the past couple of years.</p> <p>"This year we're experiencing a wetter spring than we have in the past and cold fronts throughout April have preserved the snowpack a little bit," Kyle-Milward said. "So DNR is expecting more of a typical wildfire season instead of these really severe years we've had the past few years."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/14 Spokane: hundreds rally abortion rights</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.krem.com/article/news/local/spokane-abortion-rights-rally/293-3b823a50-7cf7-4d9f-ba8f-04f73730ce6c">https://www.krem.com/article/news/local/spokane-abortion-rights-rally/293-3b823a50-7cf7-4d9f-ba8f-04f73730ce6c</a>

GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. — Hundreds of abortion-rights supporters gathered in near the Red Wagon in downtown Spokane on Saturday evening to voice their opposition to the potential overturning of Roe v. Wade.</p> <p>The event was organized by Planned Parenthood of Greater Washington and North Idaho.</p> <p>In addition to the Spokane rally, abortion rights advocates also came together in Coeur d'Alene for <a href="#">Kootenai County's third annual Women's March</a>.</p> <p>The "Ban Off Our Bodies" rally in Spokane is one of hundreds that took place today. Thousands of Americans turned out to rally for abortion rights this weekend all over the country, with demonstrations planned in Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, Chicago and other major cities, including Spokane and Coeur d'Alene.</p> <p>The protests are in response to the leaked draft opinion by the Supreme Court that showed the high court is poised to overturn Roe v. Wade, a 1973 ruling that affirmed abortion access as a constitutional right.</p> <p>Organizers of the Spokane rally told attendees that they were not to engage with any potential anti-abortion advocates because they wanted the rally to remain peaceful.</p> <p>One organizer asked the crowd, "What do we want?", to which the crowd responded, "Justice!"</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/15 Australia saved thousands, US killed 1M</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/15/world/australia/covid-deaths.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/15/world/australia/covid-deaths.html</a>
GIST	<p>MELBOURNE, Australia — If the United States had the same Covid death rate as Australia, about 900,000 lives would have been saved. The Texas grandmother who made the perfect pumpkin pie might still be baking. The Red Sox-loving husband who ran marathons before Covid might still be cheering at Fenway Park.</p> <p>For many Americans, imagining what might have been will be painful. But especially now, at the milestone of one million deaths in the United States, the nations that did a better job of keeping people alive show what Americans could have done differently and what might still need to change.</p> <p>Many places provide insight. Japan. Kenya. Norway. But Australia offers perhaps the sharpest comparisons with the American experience. Both countries are English-speaking democracies with similar demographic profiles. In Australia and in the United States, the <a href="#">median age is 38</a>. Roughly <a href="#">86 percent</a> of Australians live in urban areas, compared with <a href="#">83 percent of Americans</a>.</p> <p>Yet Australia's Covid death rate sits at one-tenth of America's, putting the nation of 25 million people (with around 7,500 deaths) near the top of <a href="#">global rankings</a> in the protection of life.</p> <p>Australia's location in the distant Pacific is often cited as the cause for its relative Covid success. That, however, does not fully explain the difference in outcomes between the two countries, since Australia has long been, like the United States, highly connected to the world through trade, tourism and immigration. In 2019, <a href="#">9.5 million international tourists</a> came to Australia. Sydney and Melbourne could just as easily have become as overrun with Covid as New York or any other American city.</p> <p>So what went right in Australia and wrong in the United States?</p> <p>For the standard slide-show presentation, it looks obvious: Australia restricted travel and personal interaction until vaccinations were widely available, then maximized vaccine uptake, prioritizing people who were most vulnerable before gradually opening up the country again.</p>

From one outbreak to another, there were also some mistakes — breakdowns of protocol in nursing homes that led to clusters of deaths; a vaccine rollout hampered by slow purchasing. And with Omicron and eased restrictions, deaths have increased.

But Australia's Covid playbook produced results because of something more easily felt than analyzed at a news conference. Dozens of interviews, along with survey data and [scientific studies](#) from around the world, point to a lifesaving trait that Australians displayed from the top of government to the hospital floor, and that Americans have shown they lack — trust, in science and institutions, but especially in one another.

When the pandemic began, [76 percent of Australians](#) said they trusted the health care system (compared with [around 34 percent](#) of Americans), and 93 percent of Australians [reported](#) being able to get support in times of crisis from people living outside their household.

In global surveys, Australians were [more likely](#) than Americans to agree that “most people can be trusted” — a major factor, [researchers found](#), in getting people to change their behavior for the common good to combat Covid, by reducing their movements, wearing masks and getting vaccinated. Partly because of that compliance, which kept the virus more in check, Australia's economy [has grown faster](#) than America's through the pandemic.

But of greater import, interpersonal trust — a belief that others would do what was right not just for the individual but for the community — saved lives. Trust mattered more than smoking prevalence, health spending or form of government, [a study](#) of 177 countries in The Lancet recently found. And in Australia, the process of turning trust into action began early.

#### **Government: Moving Quickly Behind the Scenes**

Greg Hunt had been Australia's health minister for a couple of years, after working as a lawyer and investor, when his phone buzzed on Jan. 20, 2020. It was Dr. Brendan Murphy, Australia's chief medical officer, and he wanted to talk about a new coronavirus in China.

Dr. Murphy, a low-key physician and former hospital executive, said there were worrisome signs of human-to-human transmission.

“What's your honest, considered advice?” Mr. Hunt recalled asking.

“I think this has the potential to go beyond anything we've seen in our lifetime,” Dr. Murphy said. “We need to act fast.”

The next day, Australia added the coronavirus, as a threat with “pandemic potential,” to its biosecurity list, officially setting in motion the country's emergency response. Mr. Hunt briefed Prime Minister Scott Morrison, visited the country's stockpile of personal protective equipment and began calling independent experts for guidance.

Sharon Lewin, the director of the Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity, one of Australia's top medical research organizations, received several of those calls. She fed his questions into the meetings that had started to take place with scientists and officials at Australia's public health laboratories.

“There was a very thoughtful level of engagement, with politicians and scientists, right at that early phase in January,” Dr. Lewin said.

The first positive case appeared in Australia on Jan. 25. Five days later, when the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [confirmed the first human transmission of the virus in the United States](#), President Donald J. Trump downplayed the risk. “We think it's going to have a very good ending for us,” he said.

The same day, Mr. Hunt struck a more practical tone. “Border, isolation, surveillance and case tracing mechanisms are already in place in Australia,” he said.

Less than 24 hours later, on Feb. 1, Australia closed its border with China, its largest trading partner. On Feb. 3, 241 Australians were evacuated from China and placed in government quarantine for 14 days. While Americans were still gathering in large groups as if nothing was wrong, Australia's Covid containment system was up and running.

A full border closure followed. Hotels were contracted to quarantine the trickle of international arrivals allowed in. Systems for free testing and contact tracing were rolled out, along with a federal program that paid Covid-affected employees so they would stay home.

For a business-friendly, conservative government, agreeing to the Covid-containment measures required letting go of what psychologists describe as [“sticky priors”](#) — longstanding beliefs tied to identity that often hold people back from rational decision-making.

Mr. Morrison trusted his close friend Mr. Hunt. And Mr. Hunt said he had faith in the calm assessments and credentials of Dr. Lewin and Dr. Murphy.

In a lengthy interview, Mr. Hunt added that he also had a historical moment of distrust in mind: [Australia's failures during the 1918 flu pandemic](#), when inconsistent advice and a lack of information sharing led to the rise of “snake oil” salesmen and wide disparities in death rates.

In February and March, Mr. Hunt said, he retold that story in meetings as a warning. And in a country where compulsory voting has been suppressing polarization since 1924, Australia's leaders chose to avoid partisanship. The Morrison government, the opposition Labor Party and state leaders from both parties lined up behind a “one voice” approach, with medical officers out front.

Still, with a highly contagious virus, scientists speaking from podiums could do only so much.

“Experts ‘getting on the same page’ only matters if people actually trust the actions government is taking, and trust their neighbors,” said Dr. Jay Varma, director of Cornell's Center for Pandemic Prevention and Response and a former Covid adviser to Mayor Bill de Blasio of New York.

“While that type of trust is relatively higher in New York City than in other parts of the U.S.,” said Dr. Varma, who has worked extensively in China and Southeast Asia, “I suspect it is still quite low compared to Oceania.”

### **Health Care: Sharing the Burden**

The outbreak that many Australians see as their country's greatest Covid test began in late June 2020, with a breakdown in Melbourne's hotel quarantine system. The virus spread into the city and its suburbs [from guards interacting with travelers](#), a government inquiry later found, and within a few weeks, daily case numbers climbed into the hundreds.

At Royal Melbourne, a sprawling public hospital built to serve the poor, clusters of infection emerged among vulnerable patients and workers. Case numbers and close contacts spiraled upward. Vaccines were still a distant dream.

“We recognized right away that this was a disaster we'd never planned for, in that it was a marathon, not a sprint,” said Chris Macisaac, Royal Melbourne's director of intensive care.

A few weeks in, the system started to buckle. In mid-July, dozens of patients with Covid were transferred from nursing homes to Royal Park, a satellite facility for geriatric care and rehabilitation. Soon, more than 40 percent of the cases among workers were connected to that small campus.

Kirsty Busing, an infectious disease consultant at the hospital, began to suspect — before scientists could prove it — that the coronavirus was airborne. In mid-July, on her suggestion, Royal Melbourne started giving N95 masks, which are more protective, to workers exposed to Covid patients.

In the United States, hospital executives were lining up third-party P.P.E. vendors for [clandestine meetings](#) in distant parking lots in a Darwinian all-against-all contest. Royal Melbourne's supplies came from federal and state stockpiles, with guidelines for how distribution should be prioritized.

In New York, a city of eight million people packed closely together, more than 300 health care workers died from Covid by the end of September, with [huge disparities](#) in outcomes for patients and workers from one hospital to another, mostly according to wealth.

In Melbourne, a city of five million with a dense inner core surrounded by suburbs, the masks, a greater separation of patients and an intense 111-day lockdown that reduced demand on hospital services brought the virus to heel. At Royal Melbourne, not a single worker died during Australia's worst institutional cluster to date.

In America, coordination within the health care system was haphazard. In Australia, which has a national health insurance program and a hospital system that includes both public and private options, there were agreements for load sharing and a transportation service for moving patients. The hospitals worked together, trusting that payment would be worked out.

"We had options," Dr. Macisaac said.

### **Society: Complying and Caring**

"I'd just hate to be the one who lets everyone down."

When Australians are asked why they accepted the country's many lockdowns, its once-closed international and state borders, its quarantine rules and then its vaccine mandates for certain professions or restaurants and large events, they tend to voice a version of the same response: It's not just about me.

The idea that one's actions affect others is not unique to Australia, and at times, the rules on Covid stirred up outrage.

"It was a somewhat authoritarian approach," said Dr. Greg Dore, an infectious diseases expert at the University of New South Wales in Sydney. "There were lots of mandates, lots of fines for breaching restrictions, pretty heavy-handed controlling, including measures that were pretty useless, like the policing of outdoor masking."

But, he added, the package was effective because the vast majority of Australians stuck with it anyway. "The community coming on board and remaining on board through the tough periods of 2020 and even into 2021 was really, really important," Dr. Dore said. "There is a general sense that for some things, where there are major threats, you just have to come together."

Studies show that income inequality is [closely correlated](#) with low levels of interpersonal trust. And in Australia, the gap between rich and poor, while widening, is less severe than in the United States.

During the toughest of Covid times, Australians showed that the national trait of "mateship" — [defined](#) as the bond between equal partners or close friends — was still alive and well. They saw Covid spiral out of control in the United States and Britain, and chose a different path.

Compliance rates with social distancing guidelines, along with Covid testing, contact tracing and isolation, held steady at around 90 percent during the worst early outbreaks, [according to modeling](#) from the University of Sydney. In the United States, [reductions in mobility](#) — a key measure of social distancing — were less stark, shorter and more inconsistent, based in part on location, political identity or wealth.

In Australia, rule-following was the social norm. It was Mick Fanning, a surfing superstar, who did not question the need to stay with his American wife and infant in a small hotel room for 14 days of quarantine after a trip to California. It was border officials canceling the visa of Novak Djokovic, the top

male tennis player in the world, for failing to follow a Covid vaccine mandate, leading to his eventual [deportation](#).

It was also all the Australians who lined up to get tested, who wore masks without question, who turned their phones into virus trackers with check-in apps, who set up food services for the old, infirm or poor in lockdowns, or who offered a place to stay to women who had been trapped in their homes with abusive husbands.

At a recent awards luncheon in Melbourne for people who made a difference during Covid, those were the kinds of people being celebrated. Jodie McVernon, the director of epidemiology at the Doherty Institute, was the only scientist lauded at the event.

“Care is so undervalued,” she said. “This was all about the power of care.”

And, perhaps, the power of adaptability.

When the Delta variant flooded the country last year as vaccine supplies were low, Australia’s ideas of protection and compliance changed.

Mr. Hunt scrambled to procure vaccines — far too late, critics argued, after the AstraZeneca vaccines made in Australia seemed to pose a greater-than-expected risk of heart problems — while community leaders fought against a moderate burst of fear and skepticism about vaccines.

Churches and mosques became pop-up Covid inoculation clinics. Quinn On, a pharmacist in Western Sydney’s working-class suburbs, took on extra staff at his own cost to get more people vaccinated. Mayor Chagai, a basketball coach in Sydney’s South Sudanese community, hosted Zoom calls with refugee families to answer questions about lockdowns and vaccines.

Many Aboriginal Australians, who have countless reasons to distrust the authorities, also did what they could to get people inoculated. Wayne Webb, 64, a Wadandi elder in Western Australia, was one of many to prioritize a collective appeal.

“It all goes hand in hand with protecting our old people,” he said he told the young men in his community. Vaccination uptake in Australia surged last year as soon as supplies arrived, rushing from roughly 10 percent of Australians over age 16 to 80 percent in six weeks. It was the fastest rate in the world at the time. Once that 80 percent was reached, Australia eased open its national and state borders.

Now, more than 95 percent of Australian adults are fully vaccinated — with [85 percent](#) of the total population having received two doses. In the United States, that figure is only [66 percent](#).

The arrival of the Omicron variant, which is more transmissible, has sent Australia’s [case numbers](#) soaring, but with most of the population inoculated, deaths are ticking up more slowly. Australia has a federal election on Saturday. Covid is far down the list of voter concerns.

“We learned that we can come together very quickly,” said Denise Heinjus, Royal Melbourne’s executive director for nursing, whose title in 2020 was Covid commander. “There’s a high level of trust among our people.”

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HEADLINE	05/15 Finland confirms intention to join NATO
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/15/finland-formally-confirms-intention-to-join-nato-russia">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/15/finland-formally-confirms-intention-to-join-nato-russia</a>
GIST	Finland has formally confirmed it intends to join Nato, abandoning decades of military non-alignment in a historic policy shift triggered by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.



“The president and the government’s foreign policy committee have agreed that after consulting parliament, Finland will apply for Nato membership,” president Sauli Niinistö told a press conference. “A protected Finland is being born as part of a stable, strong and responsible Nordic region.”

He hailed the decision as “a historic day” for the Nordic country, adding: “A new era is opening. A lot has happened since the day Russia invaded Ukraine. We gain security, and we also share it. It’s good to keep in mind that security isn’t a zero-sum game.”

Finland’s prime minister, Sanna Marin, said the proposal would be sent to parliament on Monday for ratification. “We hope parliament will confirm the decision in the coming days. It will be based on a strong mandate,” she said.

Marin added that as a member of Nato, Finland would help reinforce not just the 30-member, US-led defensive alliance but also “strengthen the EU, whose voice in Nato can become stronger.” The two Finnish leaders had said on Friday the country must “must apply for Nato membership without delay”.

With neighbouring Sweden’s ruling party also holding a decisive meeting on Sunday on whether to back a Swedish application for membership, Moscow’s onslaught on Ukraine looks set to usher in the expansion of Nato that Vladimir Putin claimed he wanted to prevent.

Finland shares an 810-mile (1,300km) border with Russia and, like Sweden, has maintained strict policies of neutrality then non-alignment since the end of the second world war, viewing Nato membership as a provocation of Moscow.

However, Putin’s invasion of Ukraine on 24 February has led to a profound change in its thinking, with public support for Nato accession trebling to about 75%. Polls show a majority of between 50 and 60% are also in favour in Sweden.

Niinistö called his Russian counterpart, Putin, on Saturday and informed him his country aimed to join Nato, in a conversation he described as “direct and straightforward”. He added: “Avoiding tensions was considered important.”

Niinistö said on Sunday he did not believe Russia would respond to the move with military force, but added: “It’s always worth remembering that total vigilance is in place.”

Russia has repeatedly warned Finland and Sweden against joining Nato, saying such a move would oblige it to “restore military balance” by strengthening its defences in the Baltic Sea region, including by deploying nuclear weapons.

Putin reportedly responded to Niinistö’s call by saying Nato membership “would be a mistake, since there is no threat to Finland’s security”, according to a readout of the call released by the Kremlin.

After a cross-party Swedish parliamentary review on Friday said joining Nato would boost Sweden’s national security and help stabilise the Nordic region, leaders of the country’s ruling Social Democrats were also poised on Sunday to jettison the party’s longstanding opposition to Nato membership.

With a decision expected in the early evening, Swedish media reported that – assuming Helsinki sends its application in on Monday – Stockholm is likely to follow suit as early as Tuesday, with the alliance set to launch the accession process immediately afterwards.

Nato’s secretary general, Jens Stoltenberg, has said both countries would be “welcomed with open arms” and that the accession process would be quick, though formal approval by all the alliance’s members could take several months.

	<p>However, Turkey’s president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, has expressed his opposition to the move, based on what he said was the countries’ accommodating attitude towards the Kurdistan Workers’ party (PKK), which is on the EU’s list of terrorist organisations.</p> <p>Nato’s deputy secretary general, Mircea Geoană, said on Sunday he was confident Turkey’s concerns over Finland and Sweden joining the alliance could be addressed. “I am confident if these countries decide to seek membership in Nato we will be able to welcome them to find all conditions for consensus to be met,” he said.</p> <p>Finland’s foreign minister, Pekka Haavisto, also said he was “confident” of reaching an agreement with Turkey.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/15 Circus returns to Buckley for a day: 30 May</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/community/puyallup-herald/ph-news/article261352547.html">https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/community/puyallup-herald/ph-news/article261352547.html</a>
GIST	<p>Cockatoos and aerial acts are coming to Buckley for a day before May officially ends.</p> <p>Locals can see the Culpepper &amp; Merriweather Circus on Monday, May 30 at 2 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. on an open lot next to Blue Max Meats at 29304 state Route 410.</p> <p>Pre-sale tickets cost \$12 for adults and \$7 for children 2-12 and seniors 65 years and up. Tickets bought at the door will be \$15 and \$8, respectively. Children under 2 get in for free.</p> <p>Tickets are sold online at <a href="http://cmccircus.com/home.html">cmccircus.com/home.html</a> or in-person. The in-person locations include Blue Max Meats, Main Street Bistro at 754 Main St., Odd Fellows at 120 Cedar St., as well as Blue Rooster at 331 state Route 410 S.</p> <p>The event is not exclusive to Buckley residents and is open for the public to attend, said Ali Santman, president of the Buckley Chamber of Commerce. The circus has been to Buckley in the past but has not visited since about 2011, she said.</p> <p>“One of the big things that we do ... is we try to create events, activities and increase tourism into our little town,” Santman said. “We just saw that as a fun way to do that — bring some people to town and have a fun event for the locals.”</p> <p>Circus ringmaster Simone Key said each show will last about an hour and 40 minutes and will be filled with a variety of performances by people and animals. One act includes a person balancing on a wire.</p> <p>In addition to the cockatoos, there will be a lion, tiger and horses. Key said the cockatoos used to be pets that were abandoned or relinquished. The lion and tiger came from zoos, and the horses are from a family that raised them.</p> <p>“Our animal acts are more kind of about the relationship between the handlers and the animals rather than them doing these grand tricks,” Key said. “It’s kind of more of an educational thing versus a traditional act with tricks.”</p> <p>The circus will bring a crew of about 30 people, and the tent will have space for about 700 attendees, Key said. The circus is based in Oklahoma. The circus travels to 17 states in over 32 weeks, from March until October in a typical year.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/15 Fire weather worsens, heat wave spreads</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/15/weather/weather-new-mexico-fire-record-heat-texas/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/15/weather/weather-new-mexico-fire-record-heat-texas/index.html</a>
GIST	An early season heat wave will build across the southern tier of the United States, creating “unstable conditions” for wildfires and forcing some residents to conserve power usage.

“We are expecting above normal temperatures and what that means for fires is generally unstable conditions,” Todd Shoemake, a meteorologist at the National Weather Service (NWS) office in Albuquerque, New Mexico, told CNN. “So if you do start to see fire growth, a lot of times it can become pretty explosive and really rapidly gaining in power and heat.”

A ridge of high pressure will build across the Southwest this weekend, allowing for record-breaking heat to settle in.

High temperatures will soar into the 90s and triple digits, which will pose a threat to those who are outdoors for extended periods of time.

The cities of Albuquerque, Santa Fe and Roswell in New Mexico all have the potential to tie or break record highs this weekend and early next week, making weather conditions at the Calf Canyon/Hermits Peak wildfire even more dire.

The largest fire in New Mexico state history (the Whitewater Baldy fire in 2012) burned 297,845 acres. The Calf Canyon/Hermits Peak fire has currently burned more than 270,000 acres and could surpass the number one fire in the next couple of days as it is only 27% contained.

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Makoto Moore, an incident meteorologist (IMET) at the NWS office in Pueblo, Colorado, is on location at the Calf Canyon/Hermits Peak fire.

IMETs provide on-site weather support and products to teams on the ground, including firefighters, needed to complete their mission.

“I am there primarily for firefighter safety, because I provide a safety weather watch throughout the shift, monitoring radar, satellite and observations to hopefully eliminate any weather-related surprises for all the people working in the field,” Moore explained.

“If thunderstorms develop over or near the fire, I will send out a weather alert for lightning, hail, etc. to the crews via radio. I will also alert for thunderstorm outflow winds that could alter the speed and direction of fire spread.”

One thing which could help firefighters increase containment is the wind forecast, projected to remain relatively light across the region during the next 24 hours.

“A ridge of high pressure over the area this weekend should allow for a general relaxing of the winds, though it will also push high temperatures to near-record levels,” Moore said to CNN.

However, weak winds aren’t always a good thing because it can cause plume-dominated fire activity also known as “plume collapses.”

“Plume collapses occur when the heat generated at the surface by the fire is no longer sufficient to maintain an updraft,” Moore said. “It could be because of the fire running out of fuel, or shading of the solar insolation, or any number of reasons, but the energy at the surface is cut and the column collapses due to its own weight and gravity.”

Insolation is a measure of the solar energy on a specified area in a set period of time.

It is not uncommon with fires and is usually not a significant concern. However, it does become a huge deal if a pyrocumulus cloud forms.

Given enough energy and available moisture, the clouds can turn into a thunderstorm on top of the smoke column and fire.

“This thunderstorm will produce all of the hazards of a normal thunderstorm: lightning, gusty and erratic winds, precipitation, etc., except much or all of the activity is hidden by the smoke column,” Moore said. “Firefighters on the ground may have very little warning before strong gusty winds sweep across an area.”

Meteorologists have signs they can look for in order to forecast such events, including monitoring satellite and radar imagery.

“As for predicting such a thing, we have gotten very good at forecasting wind speeds and if lighter winds are forecast for an intensely active fire, we know that there is a good chance that strong vertically developed smoke columns are a possibility,” Moore said.

Moore pointed out potential column collapses will need to be watched this weekend.

Winds will begin to increase, however, and shift rapidly as a cold front arrives into New Mexico by Monday morning.

“This front will do a couple of things,” the NWS office in Albuquerque cautioned on Saturday. “First it may make it into the Rio Grande Valley for a gap wind event with wind speeds 20-30 mph. Second it will raise dewpoints for central/eastern New Mexico.”

This increase in moisture sounds like it would be a good thing, but in reality it is just enough instability for thunderstorms to develop.

“In the end, given moisture profiles, more than likely there will be a few isolated storms that could produce some lightning and a downburst wind gusts,” the NWS office in Albuquerque said.

The strong winds could rapidly spread any ongoing fires and lightning could spark new fires.

Unfortunately the storms will not necessarily bring heavy rain showers the area desperately needs, not only because of the fires, but also due to the persistent drought.

“The drought level at which the Desert Southwest currently sits, is going to require more than one rainy day, one rainy week, or even one rainy year to improve conditions in a meaningful way,” said Jenn Varian, a meteorologist at the NWS office in Las Vegas.

The increase in cloud cover and higher humidity levels will still allow the firefighters an opportunity to increase containment numbers, but not for long.

“Another longwave trough of low pressure developing over the western third of the country means that the Desert Southwest may be entering another period of hot and dry with strong sustained winds starting Thursday and lasting into the next weekend,” Moore explained.

The heat also drains the firefighters who are wearing layers of thick protective clothing in extreme temperatures.

“Higher temperatures mean higher rates of dehydration and highlights the need for crews to drink more water to stay safe,” Moore said.

#### **Extreme heat resulting in record power demands**

More than 200 daily record high temperatures are forecast to be challenged over the next 7 few days from the Southwest all the way to the East Coast by midweek.

In Texas, this prolonged heat wave caused six power generation facilities to trip offline resulting in loss of electricity, according to a statement released Friday by the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT). As of Sunday morning five of the six plants were back online.

“We’re asking Texans to conserve power when they can by setting their thermostats to 78 degrees or above and avoiding the usage of large appliances (such as dishwashers, washers and dryers) during peak hours between 3 p.m. and 8 p.m. through the weekend,” ERCOT Interim CEO Brad Jones said in a statement Friday.

Some areas of Texas could break daily high temperatures records every day for at least the next seven days.

Several dozen cities from Arizona to the Carolinas are expected to break high temperature records this weekend.

On Sunday, Roswell in New Mexico and Midland and Odessa in Texas will see high temperatures creep up into the triple digits, remaining there until at least Thursday.

For much of East Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Mississippi and Louisiana, the concern isn’t just the temperatures themselves, but the prolonged period of time in which the heat will stick around.

Even locations known for being hot are hotter than usual. Phoenix and Tucson are forecast to reach 105 degrees on Sunday. Their daily high temperature records are 107 degrees and 104 degrees respectively.

Las Vegas may not be expecting record temperatures, but the accelerated rise in temperatures is concerning.

Last week temperatures in Las Vegas were about 20 degrees below normal. Wednesday topped out at only 69 degrees, compared to the average high temperature of 87 degrees.

“Because of the rapid warm up of about 10 degrees a day, this prevents residents and tourists alike from acclimating to the hot temperatures, and unless they’re paying close attention to the forecast, can catch them off guard when recreating outside this weekend,” Varian said.

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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/lavrov-says-hard-predict-how-long-west-total-hybrid-war-russia-will-last-2022-05-14/">https://www.reuters.com/world/lavrov-says-hard-predict-how-long-west-total-hybrid-war-russia-will-last-2022-05-14/</a>
GIST	<p>LONDON, May 14 (Reuters) - Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Saturday that Moscow was the target of "total hybrid war" by the West but would withstand sanctions by forging deeper partnerships with China, India and others.</p> <p>In a speech on the 80th day since Russia invaded Ukraine, Lavrov pointed to the barrage of sanctions imposed by the West in an effort to portray Russia as the target, not the perpetrator, of aggression.</p> <p>"The collective West has declared total hybrid war on us and it is hard to predict how long all this will last but it is clear the consequences will be felt by everyone, without exception," he said.</p> <p>"We did everything to avoid a direct clash - but now that the challenge has been thrown down, we of course accept it. We are no strangers to sanctions: they were almost always there in one form or another."</p> <p>The sanctions on Russia's top companies, banks and political elite have been imposed to punish it for a war that has killed tens of thousands of people and uprooted millions, disrupted energy markets and exacerbated a global food crisis by driving up prices for grain, cooking oils and fertiliser.</p> <p>In his speech, Lavrov laid out the strategy that Moscow is pinning its hopes on as it tries to cushion the hit to its economy and build new markets elsewhere.</p> <p>He cited the sanctions, which have included the seizure of nearly half of Russia's \$640 billion in foreign reserves, as evidence that no one is safe against expropriation and "state piracy", and of the need for countries to lessen economic reliance on the United States and its allies.</p> <p>"Not only Russia but many others too are reducing dependence on the U.S. dollar, western technology and markets," he said, without stating evidence.</p> <p>Efforts by the West to isolate Russia were doomed to fail, he said. Russia's relations with China were the best they had ever been and it was developing a privileged strategic partnership with India.</p> <p>Just back from a trip to the Middle East, he also cited the importance of ties with Egypt, Algeria and Gulf nations, as well as Asia, Africa and Latin America.</p> <p>In one example of a sanctions-induced pivot in exports, Russia sold twice as much crude oil to India in the two months after its Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine as it did in all of 2021, as Western nations cut purchases of Russian oil and Indian refiners seized the chance to buy it at a discount.</p> <p>Yet despite Russia's insistence it can thrive under sanctions, its economy is on track to shrink by somewhere between 8.8% and 12.4%, according to an economy ministry document seen by Reuters, and not return to its pre-invasion size before 2026.</p> <p>Annual consumer inflation accelerated in April to 17.83%, its highest since 2002.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/15 Neutral Switzerland leans closer to NATO</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/markets/europe/neutral-switzerland-leans-closer-nato-response-russia-2022-05-15/">https://www.reuters.com/markets/europe/neutral-switzerland-leans-closer-nato-response-russia-2022-05-15/</a>
GIST	<p>BERN, May 15 (Reuters) - Switzerland's fabled neutral status is about to face its biggest test in decades, with the defence ministry tilting closer to Western military powers in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>The defence ministry is drawing up a report on security options that include joint military exercises with NATO countries and "backfilling" munitions, Paelvi Pulli, head of security policy at the Swiss defence ministry told Reuters.</p>



The details of the policy options under discussion in the government have not been previously reported.

"Ultimately, there could be changes in the way neutrality is interpreted," Pulli said in an interview last week. On a trip to Washington this week, Defence Minister Viola Amherd said Switzerland should work more closely with the U.S.-led military alliance, but not join it, Swiss media reported.

Neutrality, which kept Switzerland out of both world wars during the 20th century, was not an objective in itself, but was intended to increase Swiss security, Pulli said.

Other options include high-level and regular meetings between Swiss and NATO commanders and politicians, she said.

Moving so much closer to the alliance would mark a departure from the carefully nurtured tradition of not taking sides that its supporters say helped Switzerland prosper peacefully and maintain a special role as intermediary, including during the West's standoff with the Soviet Union.

The idea of full membership of NATO has been discussed, but whereas Sweden and Finland - countries that also have a history of neutrality - are on the verge of joining, Pulli said the report was unlikely to recommend Switzerland take that step.

The report is due to be completed by the end of September when it will go to the Swiss cabinet for consideration.

It will be submitted to parliament for discussion and serve as a basis for possible decisions on the future direction of Swiss security policy. The report itself will not be submitted to a vote.

The defence ministry will also contribute to a broader study being prepared by the foreign ministry. That project will look at the adoption of sanctions, weapons, munitions exports and the relationship with NATO from a neutrality perspective, the foreign ministry said.

#### UKRAINE REVIVES SWISS NEUTRALITY DEBATE

Switzerland nation has not fought in an international war since 1815, when it adopted neutrality at the Congress of Vienna which ended the French Revolutionary Wars.

The 1907 Hague Convention establishes Switzerland will not take part in international armed conflicts, favour warring parties with troops or armaments, or make its territory available to the warring sides.

Neutrality, included in the constitution, does allow Switzerland the right to self defence and scope on how to interpret the political aspects of the concept not covered by the legal definition.

It was last updated in the early 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union, to allow a foreign policy based on cooperation with other countries in areas like humanitarian aid and disaster relief.

The Ukraine conflict has revived the debate, now centered on the government's decisions to impose sanctions on Russia but to stop short of allowing the re-export of Swiss-made ammunition to Ukraine.

"There is a lot of uneasiness that Switzerland cannot contribute more to help Ukraine," Pulli said.

Backfilling - where Switzerland supplies munitions to other countries to replace those sent to Ukraine - is another potential measure, Pulli said, in a shift from the government's policy until now, although direct supply is likely a step too far.

President Ignazio Cassis has ruled out arms deliveries to third countries in support of Ukraine, but, possibly showing a more expansive view of the issue, he has also said that neutrality is not a "dogma" and that failure to respond with sanctions "would have played into the hands of the aggressor."

## GROWING SUPPORT FOR NATO

Switzerland already has some ties to NATO, while last year it decided to buy Lockheed Martin (LMT.N) F-35A fighters which are being purchased or already used by some NATO members.

Switzerland "cannot join any alliance because of neutrality. But we can work together and the systems we are buying are a good basis for that," defence minister Amherd told broadcaster SRF.

The measures under consideration would be a significant move closer for a country that did not join the United Nations until 2002 and produces many of its own weapons.

Vladimir Khokhlov, spokesman for the Russian embassy in Bern, said such measures would amount to a radical change of policy for Switzerland. Moscow would "not be able to ignore" an eventual renunciation of neutrality, which would have consequences, Khokhlov said. He did not provide further details.

The Swiss military favours greater cooperation with NATO as a way to strengthen national defence, while public opinion has undergone a sea-change since the Ukraine invasion.

More than half of respondents – 56% - supported increased ties with NATO, a recent poll found – well above the 37% average in recent years.

Support for actually joining the treaty remains a minority view, but has grown significantly. The April poll by Sotomo showed 33% of Swiss people supported joining the alliance, higher than the 21% long term view in a separate study by ETH university in Zurich.

"Clearly the Russian invasion of Ukraine has changed a lot of minds. This is seen as an attack on our western democratic values," said Michael Hermann of Sotomo.

Thierry Burkart, leader of the right-of-centre Liberal Democratic Party, part of the governing coalition, described a "seismic shift" in how people feel about neutrality.

Neutrality "has to be flexible," he told Reuters.

"Before Ukraine, some people thought there would never be another conventional war in Europe," he said, adding that some had advocated for disbanding the army. "The Ukraine conflict shows we cannot be complacent."

Burkart said he supported higher military spending and a closer relationship with NATO, but not full membership.

However, Peter Keller, general secretary of the far right Swiss People's Party (SVP) told Reuters a closer relationship with NATO was incompatible with neutrality.

The SVP is also part of the governing coalition and is the biggest party in the Swiss lower house of parliament.

"There is no reason to change this successful foreign policy maxim. It has brought peace and prosperity to the people," Keller said.

The defence ministry disagrees. During her visit to Washington, Amherd said the framework of the neutrality law "allows us to work more closely together with NATO and also with our European partners," Tagesanzeiger newspaper reported.

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HEADLINE	05/14 Abortion leak changed Supreme Court?
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/abortion-us-supreme-court-clarence-thomas-e08bbdfbe48d33171fa6f2a17931da63">https://apnews.com/article/abortion-us-supreme-court-clarence-thomas-e08bbdfbe48d33171fa6f2a17931da63</a>

WASHINGTON (AP) — Justice Clarence Thomas says the Supreme Court has been changed by the shocking leak of a draft opinion earlier this month. The opinion suggests the court is poised to overturn the right to an abortion recognized nearly 50 years ago in *Roe v. Wade*.

The conservative Thomas, [who joined the court in 1991 and has long called for \*Roe v. Wade\* to be overturned](#), described the leak as an unthinkable breach of trust.

“When you lose that trust, especially in the institution that I’m in, it changes the institution fundamentally. You begin to look over your shoulder. It’s like kind of an infidelity that you can explain it, but you can’t undo it,” he said while speaking at a conference Friday evening in Dallas.

The court has said the draft does not represent the final position of any of the court’s members, and Chief Justice John Roberts has [ordered an investigation into the leak](#).

Thomas, a nominee of President George H.W. Bush, said it was beyond “anyone’s imagination” before [the May 2 leak of the opinion to Politico](#) that even a line of a draft opinion would be released in advance, much less [an entire draft that runs nearly 100 pages](#). Politico has also reported that in addition to Thomas, conservative justices Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett had voted with the draft opinion’s author, Samuel Alito, to overrule *Roe v. Wade* and a 1992 decision, *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, that affirmed *Roe*’s finding of a constitutional right to abortion.

Thomas said that previously, “if someone said that one line of one opinion” would be leaked, the response would have been: “Oh, that’s impossible. No one would ever do that.”

“Now that trust or that belief is gone forever,” Thomas said at the Old Parkland Conference, which describes itself as a conference “to discuss alternative proven approaches to tackling the challenges facing Black Americans today.”

Thomas also said at one point: “I do think that what happened at the court is tremendously bad...I wonder how long we’re going to have these institutions at the rate we’re undermining them.”

Thomas also touched in passing on the [protests by liberals at conservative justices’ homes in Maryland and Virginia](#) that followed the draft opinion’s release. Thomas argued that conservatives have never acted that way.

“You would never visit Supreme Court justices’ houses when things didn’t go our way. We didn’t throw temper tantrums. I think it is ... incumbent on us to always act appropriately and not to repay tit for tat,” he said.

Neither Thomas nor any of the attendees at the Dallas session made mention of the Jan. 6 insurrection or the actions of [Thomas’ wife, Virginia](#), in fighting to have the results of the 2020 presidential election overturned.

Clarence Thomas was speaking before an audience as part of a conversation with [John Yoo](#), who is now a Berkeley Law professor but worked for Thomas for a year in the early 1990s as a law clerk.

Each justice generally has four law clerks every year and the current group of law clerks has been a focus of speculation as a possible source of the draft opinion’s leak. They are one of a few groups along with the justices and some administrative staff that has access to draft opinions.

Thomas also answered a few questions from the audience, including one from a man who asked about the friendships between liberal and conservative justices on the court, such as a well-known friendship between [the late liberal Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg](#) and [the late conservative Justice Antonin Scalia](#). “How can we foster that same type of relationship within Congress and within the general population?” the man asked.

	<p>“Well, I’m just worried about keeping it at the court now,” Thomas responded. He went on to speak in glowing terms about former colleagues. “This is not the court of that era,” he said.</p> <p>Despite his comments, Thomas seemed in good spirits — laughing heartily at times. Yoo, who is known for writing the so-called “torture memos” that the George W. Bush administration used to justify using “enhanced interrogation” techniques after the Sept. 11 terror attacks, said at one point that he had taken pictures of notes Thomas had taken during the conference.</p> <p>“You’re going to leak them?” Thomas asked, laughing.</p> <p>Yoo responded: “Well, I know where to go...Politico will publish anything I give them now.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/15 NATO: Russia war falters; Ukraine can win</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-eurovision-song-contest-zelenskyy-kyiv-entertainment-c01129f703b79b0757771afc60172257">https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-eurovision-song-contest-zelenskyy-kyiv-entertainment-c01129f703b79b0757771afc60172257</a>
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Almost three months after Russia shocked the world by invading Ukraine, its military faced a bogged-down war, a revitalized NATO and a defending country invigorated by its win in a hugely popular pan-European music competition Sunday.</p> <p>Ukraine’s leader hailed the country’s morale-boosting victory in the <a href="#">Eurovision Song Contest</a>. With Western military officials saying Russia’s invasion had lost momentum, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy vowed his nation would claim the customary honor of hosting the next annual competition.</p> <p>“Step by step, we are forcing the occupiers to leave the Ukrainian land,” Zelenskyy said</p> <p>Ukraine’s Kalush Orchestra won the glitzy, televised Eurovision contest with its song “Stefania,” which has become a popular anthem among Ukrainians during the war. Votes from home viewers across Europe cemented the victory.</p> <p><a href="#">Top NATO diplomats</a>, including U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, gathered Sunday in Berlin to discuss the war and moves by Finland, Sweden and other countries to join the Western military alliance over mounting worry about Russia’s intensions.</p> <p>“The brutal invasion (by) Russia is losing momentum,” NATO Deputy Secretary-General Mircea Geoana said. “We know that with the bravery of the Ukrainian people and army, and with our help, Ukraine can win this war.”</p> <p>Russian President Vladimir Putin has justified the war in Ukraine by claiming it was a response to NATO’s expansion in Eastern Europe.</p> <p>The assessments of Russia’s war performance by Ukraine’s supporters came as Russian troops retreated from around Kharkiv, Ukraine’s second-largest city, after bombarding it for weeks. They and Ukraine’s fighters are engaged in a grinding battle for the country’s eastern industrial heartland, the Donbas.</p> <p>Russia has now likely lost one-third of the ground combat forces it committed in February and continues to suffer “consistently high levels of attrition” while failing to achieve any substantial territorial gains over the past month, Britain’s Defense Ministry said in its daily intelligence update Sunday.</p> <p>“Russia’s Donbas offensive has lost momentum and fallen significantly behind schedule,” the ministry said on Twitter, adding that the forces are suffering “continued low morale and reduced combat effectiveness.”</p> <p>“Under the current conditions, Russia is unlikely to dramatically accelerate its rate of advance over the next 30 days,” the ministry said.</p>

With Russian forces now pulling back from the northeastern city of Kharkiv, Ukraine's military has said Moscow is now focusing on guarding supply routes, while launching mortar, artillery and airstrikes in the eastern region of Donetsk in an attempt to deplete Ukrainian forces and destroy fortifications.

Kharkiv, which is near the Russian border and only 80 kilometers (50 miles) southwest of the Russian city of Belgorod, has undergone weeks of intense shelling. The largely Russian-speaking city with a prewar population of 1.4 million was a key military objective earlier in the war, when Moscow hoped to capture and hold major cities.

Russia also hit railways, factories and other infrastructure across Ukraine. A Russian missile hit "military infrastructure facilities" in the Yavoriv district of western Ukraine, near the border with Poland, early Sunday morning. There was no immediate information on dead or injured, said Lviv Regional Governor Maksym Kozytskyi on the Telegram messaging app.

Russia has been targeting rail facilities and other critical infrastructure in western Ukraine a major gateway for NATO-supplied weapons. Western officials have said despite the attacks there has been no appreciable impact on Ukraine's ability to resupply its forces.

After failing to capture Kyiv following the Feb. 24 invasion, Putin has shifted his focus eastward to the Donbas, aiming to encircle Ukraine's most experienced and best-equipped troops, and to seize territory still under Ukraine's control.

Russian forces control a horseshoe-shaped swath of territory in the Ukrainian areas of Donetsk and Luhansk, which make up the Donbas region, the border area where Ukraine has battled Moscow-backed separatists since 2014.

Airstrikes and artillery barrages make it extremely dangerous for journalists to move around in the east, hindering efforts to get a full picture of the fighting. But it appears to be a back-and-forth slog without major breakthroughs on either side.

In his nightly address Saturday, Zelenskyy said "the situation in Donbas remains very difficult" and Russian troops were "still trying to come out at least somewhat victorious."

In the southern Donbas, the Azov Sea port of Mariupol is now largely in Russian control, except for the few hundred troops left in the Azovstal steel factory.

A convoy of between 500 and 1,000 cars carrying civilians out of the city was reportedly able to reach the Ukrainian-held city of Zaporizhzhia on Saturday, while Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said authorities were negotiating the evacuation of 60 severely wounded troops at the steelworks.

Turkey's presidential spokesman, Ibrahim Kalin, said the country had offered to evacuate wounded Ukrainian soldiers and civilians by ship from Azovstal, according to official state broadcaster TRT. Kalin said Russian and Ukrainian officials had not given Turkey a clear answer regarding the evacuation plan, but that it was still on the table.

The invasion of Ukraine has other countries along Russia's flank worried they could be next, and in the past week the president and prime minister of Finland said they favor seeking NATO membership.

Sweden's governing Social Democratic Party is set to announce its decision on NATO membership Sunday. If it comes out in favor, as is expected, an application to join the Western military alliance could happen within days.

In a phone call Saturday, Putin told Finnish President Sauli Niinisto that there are no threats to Finland's security and joining NATO would be an "error" and "negatively affect Russian-Finnish relations."

NATO operates by consensus, and the Nordic nations' potential bids were thrown into question Friday when Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said his country is "not of a favorable opinion."

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu accused the two countries of supporting Kurdish rebel groups, but suggested Turkey would not necessarily block them joining NATO.

"These are the issues that we need to talk, of course, with our NATO allies," he said.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/15 Pro-abortion rights backers rally in anger</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/abortion-us-supreme-court-new-york-city-88bd8dd83f9df333f61ec2de647f955d">https://apnews.com/article/abortion-us-supreme-court-new-york-city-88bd8dd83f9df333f61ec2de647f955d</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — Abortion rights supporters demonstrating at hundreds of marches and rallies Saturday expressed their outrage that the Supreme Court appears prepared to scrap the constitutional right to abortion that has endured for nearly a half-century and their fear about what that could mean for women's reproductive choices.</p> <p>Incensed after a <a href="#">leaked draft opinion</a> suggested the court's conservative majority would overturn the landmark <a href="#">Roe v. Wade ruling</a>, activists spoke of the need to mobilize quickly because Republican-led states are poised to enact tighter restrictions.</p> <p>In the nation's capital, thousands gathered in drizzly weather at the Washington Monument to listen to fiery speeches before marching to the Supreme Court, which was surrounded by two layers of security fences.</p> <p>The mood was one of anger and defiance, three days after <a href="#">the Senate failed to muster enough votes to codify Roe v. Wade</a>.</p> <p>"I can't believe that at my age, I'm still having to protest over this," said Samantha Rivers, a 64-year-old federal government employee who is preparing for a state-by-state battle over abortion rights.</p> <p>Caitlin Loehr, 34, of Washington, wore a black T-shirt with an image of the late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's "dissent" collar on it and a necklace that spelled out "vote."</p> <p>"I think that women should have the right to choose what to do with their bodies and their lives. And I don't think banning abortion will stop abortion. It just makes it unsafe and can cost a woman her life," Loehr said.</p> <p>A half-dozen anti-abortion demonstrators sent out a countering message, with Jonathan Darnel shouting into a microphone, "Abortion is not health care, folks, because pregnancy is not an illness."</p> <p>From Pittsburgh to Los Angeles, and Nashville, Tennessee, to Lubbock, Texas, tens of thousands participated in events, where chants of "Bans off our bodies!" and "My body, my choice!" rang out. The gatherings were largely peaceful, but in some cities there were tense confrontations between people on opposing sides of the issue.</p> <p>Polls show that most Americans want to preserve access to abortion — at least in the earlier stages of pregnancy — but the Supreme Court appeared to be poised to let the states have the final say. If that happens, roughly half of states, mostly in the South and Midwest, are expected to quickly ban abortion.</p> <p>The battle was personal for some who came out Saturday. In Seattle, some protesters carried photographic images of conservative justices' heads on sticks.</p>



Teisha Kimmons, who traveled 80 miles to attend the Chicago rally, said she fears for women in states that are ready to ban abortion. She said she might not be alive today if she had not had a legal abortion when she was 15.

“I was already starting to self harm and I would have rather died than have a baby,” said Kimmons, a massage therapist from Rockford, Illinois.

At that rally, speaker after speaker said that if abortion is banned that the rights of immigrants, [minorities](#) and others will also be “gutted,” as Amy Eshleman, wife of Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot put it.

“This has never been just about abortion. It’s about control,” Eshleman told the crowd of thousands. “My marriage is on the menu and we cannot and will not let that happen.”

In New York, thousands of people gathered in Brooklyn’s courthouse plaza before a march across the Brooklyn Bridge to lower Manhattan for another rally.

“We’re here for the women who can’t be here, and for the girls who are too young to know what is ahead for them,” Angela Hamlet, 60, of Manhattan, said to the backdrop of booming music.

Robin Seidon, who traveled from Montclair, New Jersey, for the rally, said the nation was at a place abortion rights supporters have long feared.

“They’ve been nibbling at the edges, and it was always a matter of time before they thought they had enough power on the Supreme Court, which they have now,” said Seidon, 65.

The upcoming high court ruling in a case from Mississippi stands to energize voters, [potentially shaping the upcoming midterm elections](#).

In Texas, which has a strict law banning many abortions, the challenger to one of the last anti-abortion Democrats in Congress marched in San Antonio.

Jessica Cisneros joined demonstrators just days before early voting begins in her primary runoff against U.S. Rep. Henry Cuellar, which could be one of the first tests over whether the court leak will galvanize voters.

In Chicago, Kjirsten Nyquist, a nurse toting daughters ages 1 and 3, agreed about the need to vote. “As much as federal elections, voting in every small election matters just as much,” she said.

At many of the rallies, speakers put the issue in stark terms, saying people will die if abortions are outlawed.

In Los Angeles, high-profile lawyer Gloria Allred recounted how she could not get a legal abortion after being raped at gunpoint in the 1960s. She said she ended up having life-threatening bleeding after a “back alley” abortion.

“I want you to vote as though your lives depend on it, because they do,” she told the crowd.

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HEADLINE	05/14 Gauntlet: rebellion against return to office
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/remote-workers-dont-want-to-go-back-to-the-office-11652500810?mod=hp_lead_pos7">https://www.wsj.com/articles/remote-workers-dont-want-to-go-back-to-the-office-11652500810?mod=hp_lead_pos7</a>
GIST	Some of the economy’s most in-demand employees are about to find out how much power they have over where and how they work.

After months of return-to-work starts and stops, many tech companies, including [Alphabet Inc.](#)'s Google, Apple Inc. and [Microsoft Corp.](#), are telling remote workers [it's finally time to come back](#) for good, or at least show up part of the week. Employees who fled the Bay Area and other high-cost tech hubs earlier in the Covid-19 pandemic—or who just prefer to work from home—now face hard choices: move back, try the super commute, or hold out for a concession or new job elsewhere.

How the emerging power struggles play out will be a telling indicator of how much leverage remote-work converts in other sectors have as more employers call staff back to offices. A competitive job market, plus the relative ease with which businesses adjusted to work-from-home over the past two years, has emboldened many professionals to try to [say goodbye to offices](#) permanently.

Two-thirds of the workforce [said they would find a new job](#) if required to return to the office full-time, according to a survey of more than 32,000 workers by ADP Research Institute. Of those who [quit their jobs in 2021](#), 35% cited wanting to move to a different area, according to the Pew Research Center.

If highly skilled tech workers have trouble flexing their market value, though, it's likely many other remote workers wanting to stay put will, too.

Some tech professionals have already thrown down the gauntlet. Ian Goodfellow, a director of machine learning at Apple, announced to staff this month that he was resigning, in part because of the company's return-to-office policy. "I believe strongly that more flexibility would have been the best policy for my team," Mr. Goodfellow wrote in a goodbye note, according to a tweet from a reporter from the Verge. Mr. Goodfellow declined to comment. Apple didn't comment.

A group called Apple Together says more than 1,400 current and former employees signed [an open letter](#) to company executives asking for them to reconsider the office-return policy, which requires employees to work in-person on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays [as of last month](#). Apple employs more than 165,000 people.

"Stop treating us like school kids who need to be told when to be where and what homework to do," the letter reads.

Office mandates are proving to be recruiting opportunities for some competitors: Airbnb Inc. last month announced employees [could work from anywhere](#) without taking a pay cut. In the three days following the announcement, the company's careers page received around 800,000 visitors, according to a spokeswoman. [Twitter Inc.](#) and Zillow Group Inc. have said most employees can work from wherever they want and executives of [Facebook](#) parent Meta Platforms Inc. [are living all over](#).

Sean Regan, head of product marketing with software maker Atlassian Corp., moved to Lake Tahoe from the Bay Area this past November and is now using the company's flexible work policies to lure new hires.

"My access to top talent has gone through the roof," he says. "It takes me half the time to recruit great people when I tell them they can work anywhere."

Mr. Regan says he's currently trying to sign on someone he ran into while skiing who had also moved to Lake Tahoe from the San Francisco area. "She wants to stay in Tahoe. Her employer wants her to go back to the office," he says. "I'm recruiting her to stay put and work for us."

Workers in tech have long had the advantage: Their skills are highly sought-after in nearly every industry. As the pandemic has dragged on, flexibility started to become not a perk but something companies needed to offer in order to hang on to talent. Eager to stay competitive, companies have increasingly accommodated their workers and in some cases, [walked back in-office requirements](#).

But there are signs the balance of power may shift. [Netflix Inc.](#), [Lyft Inc.](#) and other big names in tech have posted disappointing quarterly results—a signal that leaner times may be ahead, and skilled workers won't

be in such demand. Companies including Meta say [they are slowing down hiring](#). [Peloton Interactive](#) Inc., [Carvana](#) Co. and [others](#) have [announced layoffs](#).

Some of those called back have found jobs elsewhere. Christina Patterson, 30, was managing client partnerships for a clothing-rental startup. She says that by the time she got called back to her New York office in March, she had grown allergic to in-person work. Since the fall of 2020, she had been working for months at a time from Tulum, Mexico, and wasn't ready to give it up.

Desperate to find a new role ahead of the March deadline to return to work, Ms. Patterson texted an executive she's friendly with at a Chicago-based startup, offering to be her remote assistant. "She was like, 'I'll do you one better: We need someone in business development,' " Ms. Patterson says.

She took the role at the startup, SwayPay, which makes an app for consumers to earn cash for posting TikTok videos featuring recent purchases. The new job didn't require a move or any commitment to come into the office. Her last day at the old job was the Friday before she was supposed to go back to her old office.

"I was like, 'Phew, I missed that very narrowly,' " she says.

Adam Ozimek, an economist with the think tank Economic Innovation Group, estimates that, across the U.S. workforce, there have already been 4.9 million relocations as a result of remote work, according to data extrapolated from [a survey of 23,000 workers](#). Mr. Omizek conducted the survey this past November, while working at another company. More than a quarter said they planned to move more than 4 hours from their current job in 2022—because of remote-work options, while 13% said they were looking at moving 2 to 4 hours away. Mr. Ozimek himself says he recently started commuting 2½ hours once a month from central Pennsylvania to Washington, D.C., where his job with EIG, which he joined in March, is located.

Some tech workers who have relocated and don't have permission to stay remote say they're in a standoff with HR: They've been called back to the office but haven't moved yet. They're looking for remote-friendly roles both internally or elsewhere.

"If the time comes where they say: 'Here's an ultimatum, you show up in an office or you find somewhere else to work,' I will find somewhere else to work because there are a lot of remote opportunities," says one engineer who works for a North Carolina bank and bought a house earlier this year in New York's Catskill Mountains, where he plans to stay.

Despite some signs of a downturn for the industry, tech workers who want to stay remote will have options if their employers won't accommodate them, says Tim Herbert, chief research officer for CompTIA, a tech trade association. The number of U.S. employers posting tech jobs hit a record level last month, despite initial rumblings of a downturn.

"Especially in tech, you have companies that are simultaneously either slowing or transitioning workers or sometimes laying off workers in one area of the company and then they're hiring in another area," he says. Companies with disappointing earnings can always scale back signing bonuses but continue to offer remote work as a perk for new hires, he added.

Google recently called its workers back [on a hybrid schedule](#) that requires most to be in the office three days a week. Some employees have complained that because the policy is implemented based largely on local managers' discretion, it can feel arbitrary. "If you have a friendly manager and a friendly VP who support you, then your odds are pretty good," says Andrew Gainer-Dewar, a senior engineer and member of the Alphabet Workers Union. "If you don't, then things get tough."

More than 14,000 of Google's approximately 166,000 employees have requested to go fully remote or to transfer to a new location, and the company has approved 85% of those requests, according to a spokeswoman. "We know our employees have many choices about where they work," she said. "So we continue to provide top of market compensation."

Until August, Laura de Vesine was a senior engineer for Google living in San Jose, Calif., near the company's offices. She jumped ship before officially being called back after growing tired of uncertainty surrounding when she'd have to return to work. She knew she wanted to move to a lower-cost city where she wouldn't depend so much on a car, such as Philadelphia.

Such a move would have involved a 15% pay cut from Google, she says. "Is my work actually worth less?" she says she asked herself. If she wanted to keep her Bay Area salary, she worried she'd be required to report at least a few times a week to Google's New York City office.

Instead, she made the move to Philadelphia and took a remote role with a New York-based cloud-computing company. She says she is now making around 20% more than her former salary and has the assurance she won't have to give up her remote status.

"I could have confidence it wasn't a temporarily remote offer," she says.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/14 Subtle way to rally for abortion rights: 1973</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2022/may/14/1973-merch-abortion-protests-roe-v-wade">https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2022/may/14/1973-merch-abortion-protests-roe-v-wade</a>
GIST	<p>This weekend's expected pro-choice mass <a href="#">protests</a> across America will no doubt feature signs and chants that call for, as social media has in recent days, "bans off our bodies".</p> <p>But some of what many <a href="#">protesters</a> wear across different cities will probably be a bit more cryptic.</p> <p>As well as green, a colour associated with <a href="#">abortion</a> rights, expect to see "1973" emblazoned across sweatshirts, T-shirts, caps and tote bags.</p> <p>This is the year of <a href="#">Roe v Wade</a>, the landmark supreme court decision providing women with the constitutional right to seek an abortion in the US.</p> <p>The historic ruling is now under existential threat and protests have been spurred by <a href="#">leaked news</a> earlier this month that six out of nine US supreme court justices have signed on to a draft opinion that overturns Roe, with a final decision expected next month.</p> <p>The garments emblazoned 1973 are part of a range made by Prinkshop, a US company that describes itself as "a social enterprise that creates advocacy campaigns that are designed to be worn", and sold on Social Goods, a site that sells activist clothing.</p> <p>Part of the proceeds for sales on Social Goods go directly to the the National Institute for Reproductive Health, a New York-based advocacy group campaigning for reproductive choice.</p> <p>In the past week, 1973 merchandise has been worn by Lizz Winstead, one of the creators of The Daily Show, who was speaking at a rally in New York, and by Benedict Cumberbatch and other cast members on <a href="#">Saturday Night Live</a>.</p> <p>According to the New York Times, sales of 1973 items have surged since early May when leaked documents suggest the supreme court is poised to strike down <a href="#">Roe v Wade</a>, leaving it up to individual states to decide if they want to allow or ban abortion.</p> <p>Imitation is always a sign of popularity too – there are now 1973 T-shirts available on Etsy and Redbubble.</p> <p>To wear this year written across clothing is a quiet but determined way to protest – even if passersby do not know the significance of 1973 in this context, it sparks conversations.</p>

“They get people to start talking and keep talking on the issues,” said Kate Sokolov, one of the founders of Social Goods.

For the record-breaking Women’s March in 2017, the pussy hat – a pink, often [home-knitted beanie](#) with cat-like ears – became [the choice](#) to hit back against the presidency of Donald Trump and his famous “[grab them by the pussy](#)” remark, and those items are likely to be prevalent at Saturday’s protests.

The Prinkshop range actually dates back to 2013 to mark the 40th anniversary of the Roe v Wade ruling.

Amy Schumer and Busy Philipps have previously worn the items. Prinkshop founder Pamela Bell described it as a “slow and steady seller” and “a kind of a code”.

Lisa Sokolov, the other founder of Social Goods, hopes it’s a code more and more people will understand.

“Our goal was always to make a statement,” she said, “and that merchandise could be the catalyst for change.”

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HEADLINE	<b>05/15 Covid outsized impact on US</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/15/us-public-health-healthcare-covid-society">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/15/us-public-health-healthcare-covid-society</a>
GIST	<p>David Rosner continually talks to colleagues who are distraught about the American response to the Covid-19 pandemic.</p> <p>“When you are in a school of public health and a public health environment, people really feel when they are failing,” said Rosner, who studies public health and social history at the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health.</p> <p>That defeated feeling is compounded by the fact that 1 million people in the US have died from Covid-19 – the <a href="#">highest Covid death rate</a> among large wealthy countries.</p> <p>According to public health experts, the virus’s outsized impact on the US can be attributed in part to underinvestment in long-term care, in primary care and in public health departments. As a result, some people were more vulnerable to Covid and had little connection to – or trust in – the healthcare providers who urged them to socially distance, to wear masks and to get vaccinated.</p> <p>It was a disconnect, they say, that was only exacerbated by misinformation – particularly by Republican leaders’ undermining of scientists’ recommendations.</p> <p>“This is more than just a failure of a health system,” said Rosner. “It’s a failure of an American ideology.”</p> <p><b>A history of poor healthcare quality and access</b></p> <p>The problems in US society and healthcare that lead to the high death toll predate the pandemic.</p> <p>In 2018, the country spent an average of \$10,637 on healthcare per person, almost twice as much as other large and wealthy countries, <a href="#">according to data</a> from the Kaiser Family Foundation. And yet, compared with those countries, the US had a significantly lower life expectancy and the worst healthcare quality and access.</p> <p>Almost \$4,000 of that additional spending comes from higher payments to hospitals for inpatient and outpatient hospital care. Meanwhile, over the last decade, US spending for state public and local health departments <a href="#">decreased</a> by 16% and 18% respectively.</p> <p>“We have really valued the hospital care to the exclusion of public health and community healthcare in this country,” said Sheila Davis, CEO of the non-profit Partners in Health, which tries to bring healthcare to the world’s poorest places.</p>

She argues that reimbursement patterns in the US focus on care delivered at hospitals, “which is the most expensive place to deliver care, with the most expensive providers”, she said.

As an alternative, she points to a comprehensive model, “which has excellent hospital care but also has a strong public health department, as well as community care”, such as federally qualified health centers in underserved communities.

The one health area where the US spends significantly less than other countries is on long-term care, including nursing homes. In 2018, the country spent \$516 a person on long-term care, less than half of what comparable countries spent, according to [KFF data](#).

The pandemic exposed these disparities. About three-quarters of Americans who died from Covid were 65 or older – including more than 150,000 nursing home residents, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [data](#).

A majority – more than two-thirds – of nursing homes in the US are for-profit institutions. They often don’t pay their workers much, are understaffed and have high turnover rates: the mean US wage for [nursing assistants and orderlies](#) in 2020 was \$14.82 an hour, and the mean turnover rate for nurse staff in 2017 and 2018 was 128%, [according to a study](#).

That understaffing saw some nursing homes fail to follow best practice for infection control, said Dr Celine Gounder, an epidemiologist at New York University and editor-at-large for Kaiser Health News.

“If you have workers who are paid poorly and have very difficult working conditions, they are not going to trust the employer as much,” Gounder said. “So in a crisis when you have lack of trust, that’s going to create barriers to everyone working in synchronicity to address problems.”

Almost half of the aides and personal care workers, who often make little money, [are Black or Hispanic](#). Nursing homes whose staff come from “less white” neighborhoods saw larger Covid-19 outbreaks, probably because those neighborhoods are also generally denser and have residents who rely more on public transportation, according to a [report](#) from a Harvard University economist.

Nursing home residents “were the most vulnerable population – so if Covid made it into the building, bad outcomes were likely to follow shortly thereafter”, said Brian McGarry, a University of Rochester professor who studies long-term care.

In general, life just appeared to be more difficult for seniors in the US than those in similar countries – even before the pandemic. For example, US seniors tend to be more likely to worry about having enough money for meals or medical needs, and to not fill a prescription or skip doses because of the cost, according to a 2017 [Health Affairs](#) study.

In the US, 36% of older adults reported having three or more chronic conditions, such as chronic lung diseases and heart conditions, which placed people at greater risk of becoming severely ill from Covid. In New Zealand, Australia, the Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland, the figures were 17% or under. The US also had the highest rate – 55% – of people taking four or more prescriptions regularly.

Gounder’s grandparents lived in Normandy, France, and never had to worry about medical bills or whether they could see a doctor, she said. “There might be a wait to get an appointment, but they could always get the medical care they needed,” she said.

Americans are also less likely to have a primary care provider, which contributed to the high death toll here. In the Netherlands, 71% of adults have had a regular doctor or place of care for five years or more; in the US, the number is 43%, [according to a study](#) from the Commonwealth Fund, a non-profit focused on improving the health system.



“It’s especially a factor when it comes to the vaccination campaign,” said Dr David Blumenthal, president of the Commonwealth Fund. “We know from [survey data](#) that people like to get vaccinated in their primary care physician’s office, but too few Americans have primary care physicians.”

That shortage is due in part, Blumenthal said, to tuition fees and to the wage gap between primary care doctor and specialists – again, both figures where the US tops the charts.

“Compensation is an important factor: it’s not just how much people are paid but how hard they have to work to get that level of income,” said Blumenthal, who was a primary care physician himself. Without a primary care provider, he said, many sick people end up visiting emergency rooms – or not seeking care at all.

“In the pandemic, when you are going to an emergency room, you are surrounding yourself with tens or hundreds of other people, many of whom will not have been infected until you show up, so it’s not an epidemiologically helpful way to manage sick people,” Blumenthal said.

Meanwhile, the US counties that were hit hardest after vaccines became available were those in which a majority voted for Donald Trump in 2020, according to a [National Public Radio study](#).

Since vaccines became widely available in May 2021, people in counties where more than 60% of voters supported Trump were 2.73 times as likely to die from Covid than those in counties where that same percentage supported Joe Biden.

The US also trailed other large wealthy countries in its vaccination rate – and a contributor to that was the low vaccination rates among Republicans. As of November 2021, 91% of Democrats had received at least one dose of the vaccine, while only 53% of Republicans had, according to a Kaiser Family Foundation [survey](#).

“You can’t separate our failure in the pandemic from conflicts over ideology and politics,” said Blumenthal. “The approach to the pandemic became enmeshed in people’s party affiliation and in their views towards government.”

That’s in large part due to Republicans such as Trump, said Rosner. After the then-president contracted Covid in October 2020 and became much sicker than he publicly acknowledged, Trump wrote on Twitter: “Don’t be afraid of Covid. Don’t let it dominate your life.” During a presidential debate, Trump also said of Biden: “I don’t wear masks like him. Every time you see him, he’s got a mask.”

Contrast that with another conservative politician, Boris Johnson, the UK prime minister, Rosner said. After also being hospitalized with Covid, Johnson [thanked](#) his nurses and said the National Health Service had saved his life “no question” and that “things could have gone either way”.

“It’s not like [Johnson] is some angel, but he acknowledged something deeper in British culture that in some sense trusted medicine, trusted public health, trusted the health system, in a way that Trump didn’t even feel was necessary,” said Rosner.

### **Preparing for the next emergency**

Despite their dismay over the number of preventable Covid deaths, public health experts say they are encouraged by federal government efforts to make sure the US is better prepared for the next emergency, which they say is inevitable.

For example, the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (Cares) Act included [\\$300m](#) for community health worker services to try to improve, among other things, health and mental health care access.

	“We were very pleased with the inclusion of community health workers in a lot of the Biden administration funding during the emergency,” said Davis. “Now the goal – and the hope – is that that will [become] a permanent part of our health structure.”
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HEADLINE	<b>05/14 Thousands rally abortion rights across US</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/14/abortion-rights-protests-us-roe-v-wade">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/14/abortion-rights-protests-us-roe-v-wade</a>
GIST	<p>Thousands of people were taking part in protests across the US on Saturday to decry the supreme court’s expected reversal of the landmark 1973 law that made abortion legal in America.</p> <p>Organizers said there were more than 380 protest events in cities including major ones in Washington DC, New York City, Los Angeles and Chicago to demand that the right to an abortion is not stripped away by the court, which is dominated by rightwing justices.</p> <p>Gathering in large groups and holding signs that included slogans such as “Reproductive justice for all” and “We will not go back”, and chanting “My body, my choice”, the protesters have been spurred by the leak of a supreme court draft opinion on 2 May. The leaked draft showed that the five rightwing justices on the nine-member court had voted to overturn Roe v Wade, the historic case that provided federal protection for abortion rights and proved a beacon in international efforts to improve the rights of women.</p> <p>In the US capital, protestors gathered at the Washington Monument before marching to the supreme court, which is surrounded by a security fence. Some held pictures of coat hangers to symbolize the dangerous measures some people resorted to for illegal abortions prior to the Roe v Wade ruling. “If it’s a fight they want, it’s a fight they’ll get,” said Rachel Carmona, executive director of the Women’s March, one of the groups, along with Planned Parenthood, UltraViolet and MoveOn that organized Saturday’s demonstrations, which they called “Bans Off Our Bodies”.</p> <p>“We have to see an end to the attacks on our bodies,” Carmona added. “You can expect for women to be completely ungovernable until this government starts to work for us.”</p> <p>If the court were to end protections for abortion following the challenge brought by Mississippi, at least <a href="#">26 US states, mostly in the south and midwest, would be certain or likely to outlaw abortion</a>, forcing women to <a href="#">travel hundreds of miles to the nearest clinic</a>, <a href="#">self-manage abortions with medication</a> and heighten the risk of prosecution, abuse and violence for women and doctors.</p> <p>Even though a clear majority of Americans support in principle women’s right to have an abortion, the topic has long been a politically toxic one, with Republicans persistently pushing for the protections to be weakened or scrapped entirely.</p> <p>Oklahoma and Texas, both Republican-led states, <a href="#">have established bans on abortion</a> after six weeks, while lawmakers in Louisiana recently mulled a bill that would charge women with murder should they end their pregnancy.</p> <p>Protest organizers stressed that abortion remains legal until the final supreme court decision. “Planned Parenthood health centers remain open, abortion is currently still legal, and we will continue to fight like hell to protect the right to access safe, legal abortion,” said Alexis McGill Johnson, chief executive of of Planned Parenthood Federation of America.</p> <p>But people at the protests spoke of their alarm over the prospect of losing a right that women have relied upon for the past 50 years. “How can they take away what I feel is a human right from us?” said Julie Kinsella, a teacher who took part in the New York protest. Kinsella said she felt “anger” and “outrage” when she heard the news of the draft opinion.</p>

"It just made me think: what direction is the US moving toward with that decision?" she said. "We have made so much progress up until this point. I would just hate to see us backtrack and fight for what we already have right now."

Other women shared their own experiences of abortion. Teisha Kimmons, who traveled 80 miles to attend the Chicago rally, said she feared for women in states that are ready to ban abortion. She said she might not be alive today if she had not had a legal abortion when she was 15.

"I was already starting to self-harm and I would have rather died than have a baby," said Kimmons, a massage therapist from Rockford, Illinois.

At the rally in Los Angeles, Gloria Allred, the women's rights lawyer, shared the story of how she had an illegal abortion in California in the 1960s, before Roe v Wade.

"I was left in a bathtub in a pool of my own blood," Allred said. "A nurse said to me, 'I hope this teaches you a lesson.' It did reach me a lesson, but not the one she wanted. Abortion must be safe, it must be legal, it must be affordable, it must be available."

Barbara Lee, a Democratic member of Congress, also told the Los Angeles crowd of her own pre-Roe abortion, which happened when she was a teenager. "We're here today to tell these radical extremists that if you criminalize people for having an abortion, if you make abortion illegal, if you take away our rights to make our personal decisions about our bodies, we will see you at the ballot box in November," Lee said.

Elijah Lopez, 15, stood side by side with his mother, Lidia, at the rally carrying a sign that said: "My mom is pissed." Lidia's sign read: "Yeah, I'm pissed."

"Today is an important day in history," she said, referring to the rallies taking place across the US. "I was telling my son even though California is likely to maintain reproductive rights, in many other states that's not going to be the case."

"We can show them that people don't want this," Elijah said.

They came from the Inland Empire to advocate for reproductive rights together, part of a shared tradition of activism that began years ago when they started demonstrating against family separation under the Trump administration, which Lidia said was her son's introduction to peaceful protest.

"It's easy to just not do anything. We have to take as many opportunities as we can to show up. I want him to be here," she said.

Saturday's rally brought out many people who had never attended such protests before but were called to action seeing reproductive rights in jeopardy. Reginald Wheeler, a lifelong Los Angeles resident, said the event downtown marked his first protest.

"I support women," he said. "I would hope this is a reality check for those judges." He added that he worries about what will happen when people don't have access to abortion. "We're gonna have a lot of unwanted children, children suffering from homelessness."

Luna Hernandez with Rise Up 4 Abortion Rights, an organizer of the rally, said the event would get people into the streets to stop the supreme court from taking away reproductive rights.

"Only the people can stop this," Hernandez said. "We have to refuse to allow this. This has to be a turning point, it's not a done deal."

"When abortion is illegal, women die. Forced motherhood is female enslavement," she said.

	<p>The prospect of looming bans on abortion in dozens of US states has provoked international, as well as domestic alarm. On Saturday, Dr Tlaleng Mofokeng, the United Nations special rapporteur on the right to health, told the Guardian that the US should not drop federal protections for abortion.</p> <p>“It sends chills down my spine to think that the court is being brought on to play – as a very powerful player – to decide on an issue of human rights that has jurisprudence, and has a basis in legal findings, that will actually lead to restriction of rights,” said Mofokeng.</p> <p>The primary concern of Clarence Thomas, however, appears to be the leak itself. Thomas, a conservative supreme justice, said the release of the draft opinion to Politico was “tremendously bad”.</p> <p>The judge, whose wife Virginia repeatedly urged Donald Trump’s chief of staff to take steps to overturn the 2020 election won by Joe Biden, told a conference in Dallas: “I wonder how long we’re going to have these institutions at the rate we’re undermining them. And then I wonder when they’re gone or destabilized, what we’re going to have as a country.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/15 Drones ‘war-enabling not war-winning’</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/15/war-enabling-not-war-winning-how-are-drones-affecting-the-ukraine-war">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/15/war-enabling-not-war-winning-how-are-drones-affecting-the-ukraine-war</a>
GIST	<p>Shot after shot pounded into the Russian missile battery hidden by the lighthouse on Snake Island, a Black Sea rock 22 miles (35km) from the Ukrainian coast. The edited video, <a href="#">released by the Ukrainian military</a>, showed the strike and its aftermath – all taken from a Turkish-designed Bayraktar TB2 drone.</p> <p>Until then, evidence of the TB2 – a <a href="#">remotely piloted killer drone</a> with a range of up to 190 miles – had largely disappeared from the conflict. The assumption was that the two dozen or so that Ukraine had bought from Turkey had been shot down and Ankara, not wanting to upset Russia, had declined to supply more.</p> <p>Yet the battle for control of Snake Island suggested the picture had changed. A day later, another TB2 video, accompanied by the pumping music typical of these propaganda releases, <a href="#">showed a landing craft being destroyed</a>; a day after that, the downing of an Mi-8 helicopter as Russian troops were disembarking. Death from a distance, shown on social media video.</p> <p>An aviation analyst, Amelia Smith, spotted that one of the drone videos indicated the drone had a <a href="#">new registration: T253</a> – not seen in Ukraine before. It had been spotted being tested in late March around the <a href="#">manufacturer’s test facility in Turkey</a>, suggesting it was newly supplied, perhaps part of a new batch.</p> <p>One week on, <a href="#">Russia said it had shot down nine TB2 drones</a>, which cost somewhere between \$1m (£820,000) to \$2m each, plus several other uncrewed aircraft, in the battle for Snake Island. While that claim is hard to verify, control of the territory is still being contested, for all the videoed strikes.</p> <p>The TB2s are clearly militarily effective – and are used for all their propaganda worth. But it is not obvious they are militarily decisive. The point is not lost on Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, who said in April: “With all due respect to Bayraktar, and to any hardware, I will tell you, frankly, this is a different war.”</p> <p>The 11-week conflict – in which Russia’s invasion has stalled after capturing most of the south coast and some of the east of the country – has become, since the abortive attempt to take Kyiv, largely a battle of tanks and artillery in which both sides exchange heavy and often unguided fire as they fight over increasingly small amounts of territory.</p> <p>This is not to suggest that drones are irrelevant. However, it reflects in part the reality that for both sides, the larger armed drones – the TB2s on the Ukrainian side and Russia’s nearest equivalent, the Orion drone – have not been present in large numbers and once eliminated are not easy to replace.</p>

Sam Bendett, a drone expert with the US Center for Naval Analyses thinktank, said the Ukrainian military had taken advantage of the fact that Russia did not control all the airspace and that it did not have persistent electronic warfare defences “with some very accurate and significant strikes”. But he added: “What is needed from their perspective is to do so on a much larger scale.”

Russia knew it needed to counter the TB2 from the 2020 war between Armenia and Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh, in which [Azerbaijan used Turkish drones to knock out Armenia’s Russian-designed tanks](#) and gain a decisive advantage.

Moscow had long lagged behind in drone technology, said Douglas Barrie, an aerospace analyst at the International Institute for Strategic Studies. “Russia is having to play catchup. They have underinvested in this area since the early 1990s, just as they underinvested across the board,” he said.

Moscow started deploying Orion combat drones [in Ukraine in March](#), followed almost immediately by reports [one had been shot down](#). “They went into the war with a limited supply, the consequence of decisions made years ago; perhaps with two or three dozen Orions, instead of having a larger number,” Bendett said.

Ukraine has wasted little opportunity in trying to demonstrate the homespun nature of Russian drones: videos of a [downed Orlan 10 reconnaissance drone being taken apart](#) show it relies on a consumer Canon DSLR camera with key buttons glued into position and, for its fuel tank, parts of a water bottle, including the screw-on top.

“No original part” was made in Russia, the Ukrainians conclude in the video, and the true cost of the drone was estimated at \$3,000 rather than the \$80,000 to \$120,000 official cost. It is probably a reasonable estimate, but in reality, even Turkish TB2 drones have relied on off-the-shelf components to keep costs down and the pace of manufacturing up.

Meanwhile, as the war becomes increasingly attritional, and armed drones are knocked out of the sky, new drones are coming to the fore. The US has agreed to supply to Ukraine at least 700 of the less sophisticated single-use, or kamikaze, Switchblade 300 and 600 drones, with a range of six or 25 miles, loitering munitions that can hang in the sky and smash down, with fearful effect on their target.

Switchblades have started to arrive on the frontline – a [Ukrainian video from a week ago](#) purports to show a Russian position struck from above, followed by soldiers fleeing in terror. But again, although the number of kamikaze drones appears large, the stockpile may be quickly depleted as the war continues.

Prof Peter Lee, a drones expert at Portsmouth University, said that in a war where “no side has control of the air” the most significant use of drones has instead been for “intelligence gathering and situational awareness – exactly what aircraft were first used for 100 years ago”.

Each side has made heavy use of simple, commercially available drones for reconnaissance, with videos frequently released into the public domain, such as an [edited montage](#) of footage of a Russian armoured column being ambushed in Brovary, east of Kyiv, in March. Drone footage of artillery shelling, attacks on armoured vehicles and other fighting on both sides have become a routine feature of the war.

Such has been the demand for simple camera drones that China’s DJI, the world’s largest manufacturer, chose in April to suspend sales of its easy-to-use drones to Ukraine and, more surprisingly, to Russia – although it is unclear if the ban will have a meaningful effect. One expert has estimated that Ukraine is operating as many as [6,000 reconnaissance drones](#) on the battlefield.

“Drones are not a war-winning technology,” Lee said. “But they are a war-enabling technology, and what we have seen is Ukraine responding in a quicker and more agile way.”

HEADLINE	05/15 Day 81 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/15/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-81-of-the-invasion">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/15/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-81-of-the-invasion</a>
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A large convoy of hundreds of cars and vans carrying refugees from the ruins of Mariupol arrived in the Ukrainian-controlled city of Zaporizhzhia on Saturday night after waiting days for Russian troops to allow them to leave, Reuters reports. <a href="#">Ukraine</a> has gradually been evacuating civilians from the devastated city for more than two months.</li> <li>• <b>Ukraine has ridden a wave of emotional support from Europeans to win the 66th Eurovision song contest</b>, which was held on Saturday evening in Turin in Italy. Stefania by Kalush Orchestra finished first after strong showings by the United Kingdom, Spain and Sweden in the early voting. The Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy <b>hailed the win and pledged to one day hold the final in a “free, rebuilt” Mariupol.</b></li> <li>• <b>The US Senate minority leader, Mitch McConnell, joined the growing list of US politicians making visits to Kyiv.</b> Zelenskiy welcomed McConnell’s visit as a powerful signal of bipartisan support for <a href="#">Ukraine</a>.</li> <li>• <b>Zelenskiy also thanked president Joe Biden for signing into law this week an update to the second world war era Lend-Lease act</b>, which allows for faster production and delivery by the US of weapons and munitions to allies engaged in conflicts in which it is not a direct participant.</li> <li>• <b>Russia’s ambassador to the US, Anatoly Antonov, says his country’s diplomats in Washington DC are being threatened with violence and harassed by US intelligence services</b>, Reuters is reporting, citing the Tass news agency of <a href="#">Russia</a>.</li> <li>• <b>Finland’s president, Sauli Niinistö, told Vladimir Putin that Helsinki plans to join Nato.</b> Niinistö delivered the news during a phone call with the Russian leader.</li> <li>• <b>Putin said abandoning neutrality would be a mistake and that there are no current threats to Finland’s security.</b> Russia has described Helsinki’s bid to join Nato as a hostile move that “definitely” would represent a threat – to which Moscow will respond.</li> <li>• <b>Ukraine says Moscow is planning to hold a referendum, perhaps as early as Sunday, on whether Mariupol wants to become part of Russia.</b> It follows news of a similar poll in Georgia’s breakaway region of <b>South Ossetia</b> and allegations from western allies that Russia is planning sham referendums to justify military actions.</li> <li>• <b>Russian troops have withdrawn from the Kharkiv city area, its mayor, Ihor Terekhov, said.</b> He said that, “due to the efforts of Kharkiv territorial defence and Ukrainian armed forces, the Russians have withdrawn out far from the city area in the direction of the Russian border”.</li> <li>• <b>The war will be over by the end of 2022, Ukraine’s head of military intelligence said.</b> Major general Kyrylo Budanov claimed Moscow was suffering heavy casualties and predicted a turning point by mid-August – adding his belief that “most of the active combat actions will have finished by the end of this year”.</li> <li>• <b>Moscow is failing to reach its political aims in Ukraine, the UK’s Ministry of Defence (MoD) said.</b> The fact Russia has only succeeded in imposing a pro-Russia local leadership in the city of Kherson “highlights the failure of Russia’s invasion to make progress towards its political objectives”, the latest intelligence update said.</li> <li>• <b>“Very difficult negotiations” on the next stage of evacuations from Mariupol were ongoing, Zelenskiy said.</b> The city’s last remaining Ukrainian defenders are holed up in the Azovstal steel plant.</li> </ul>
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HEADLINE	05/14 DOH warns dangerous homemade formula
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/health/baby-formula-shortage-washington-officials-urge-parents-to-avoid-dangerous-homemade-recipes/281-fcf00cb8-b8d1-4f50-9880-16dabee3df9e">https://www.king5.com/article/news/health/baby-formula-shortage-washington-officials-urge-parents-to-avoid-dangerous-homemade-recipes/281-fcf00cb8-b8d1-4f50-9880-16dabee3df9e</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — As parents around the nation scramble to grapple with a shortage of baby formula products in the U.S., state officials are urging families to avoid resorting to homemade alternatives.</p> <p>Washington state’s Department of Health shared a social media post on earlier this week warning of “dangerous” homemade formula.</p>



Out-of-stock rates have surged for formula in recent months, with Washington [among a number of states](#) experiencing higher than 40% in April. Rates have been even higher in some metro areas, including Seattle.

In [February](#), the Food and Drug Administration [announced the recall](#) of Similac, Alimentum and EleCare powdered infant formulas produced in Sturgis, Michigan. The FDA said it's investigating consumer complaints of bacterial infections in four infants who consumed powdered infant formula [produced in Abbott Nutrition's facility in Sturgis](#).

The recall has made an [impact on local food banks](#), which are struggling to keep up with increased demand for formula amid higher prices.

"The biggest items we distribute through this program are diapers and formula," White Center Food Bank Executive Director Carmen Smith told KING 5's Kalie Greenberg last week.

The White House [launched a webpage](#) Friday with a [summary of resources](#) to help families find formula, including manufacturer hotlines and local community resources.

President Biden also met with manufacturers this week to learn how they could increase production and how his administration could help.

WSDOH also shared a social media post on Friday explaining the importance of talking to a healthcare provider before switching an infant over to a new kind of formula.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/14 Judge tosses Hanford workers vax lawsuit</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/judge-tosses-covid-19-vaccine-objections-of-hanford-workers">https://komonews.com/news/local/judge-tosses-covid-19-vaccine-objections-of-hanford-workers</a>
GIST	<p>RICHLAND, Wash. (AP) — A federal judge has dismissed a lawsuit brought by several hundred Hanford nuclear reservation and Pacific Northwest National Laboratory workers in Richland, Washington, over COVID-19 vaccine requirements.</p> <p>The lawsuit was filed in November to halt enforcement of President Joe Biden's executive orders requiring COVID-19 vaccinations for Department of Energy employees and the employees of contractors and subcontractors on federal projects, The Tri-City Herald reported.</p> <p>But U.S. Judge Thomas Rice found that lawyers for the Hanford and national lab workers had not provided clear arguments nor specific information about most workers to make their case.</p> <p>With the original complaint already changed once, Rice had no confidence in another amended complaint after their "continued failures to address the shortcomings in their various pleadings," he said in his order dismissing the case. The case has been argued by Nathan Arnold of Seattle and Pete Serrano, a Pasco city council member and director and attorney for the Silent Majority Foundation in Pasco, which organized the lawsuit.</p> <p>Rice had already refused to temporarily halt enforcement of the vaccine mandates while the lawsuit proceeded. The judge said 307 of the workers in the case had not shown they were harmed by the vaccine mandate or that a decision in their favor would redress any harm.</p> <p>Many had not filed for religious or medical exemptions allowed by the mandates, Rice said. Others had filed but failed to provide information to the court on their exemption or vaccination status.</p> <p>"Without knowing whether these plaintiffs are in compliance with the vaccination or exemption requirements, it is impossible to know whether they could face an adverse employment action," Rice said.</p>



<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	<p>Other plaintiffs failed to say who employed them, giving them no standing in the case. That left just seven plaintiffs in the case with possibly valid claims.</p> <p>Attorneys argued that the vaccine mandates violated the U.S. Constitution. But Rice found that “a closer examination of the claims reveals only broad recitations of various constitutional principles muddled with repetitive allegations that the executive orders were promulgated in excess of President Biden’s authority.”</p> <p>Claims based on freedom of religion did not hold up because plaintiffs did not identify the religious activities they were engaged in or how those activities were substantially burdened by the executive orders, Rice said. Rice also found that the vaccine mandates or a valid exemption were a requirement for employment, but no one had been forced to get a vaccine, he said.</p> <p>DOE hires contractors to do most of the work at the Hanford site, with the large majority of the 11,000 workers at the nuclear reservation employed by contractors and subcontractors. The claimants in the lawsuit included some DOE employees, but mostly contractor and subcontractor employees.</p> <p>The 580-square-mile (1,502-square-kilometer) Hanford nuclear reservation in Eastern Washington was used from World War II through the Cold War to produce nearly two-thirds of the plutonium for the nation’s nuclear weapons program.</p> <p>About \$2.5 billion annually is spent on environmental cleanup of the contaminated site. Pacific Northwest National Laboratory is a Department of Energy Office of Science laboratory in Richland operated by Battelle under an Energy Department contract. It employs about 5,350 people and has an annual budget of about \$1.25 billion.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/14 Thousands rally across Puget Sound</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/thousands-rally-for-abortion-rights-across-puget-sound-joining-a-nationwide-day-of-action">https://www.q13fox.com/news/thousands-rally-for-abortion-rights-across-puget-sound-joining-a-nationwide-day-of-action</a>
GIST	<p>Thousands of protestors and abortion rights supporters gathered across the Puget Sound region on Saturday, as part of a nationwide day of action to rally and march for women's rights, specifically, abortion rights.</p> <p>After a <a href="#">leaked draft opinion</a> suggested the U.S. Supreme Court is considering to overturn the landmark Roe v. Wade ruling, activists around the country spoke of the need to mobilize quickly to defend the right to keep abortion legal. Tens of thousands participated in events around the country, where chants of "Bans off our bodies!" and "My body, my choice!" rang out. Cities around the Puget Sound region also banded together to ensure their voices are heard.</p> <p><b><u>Seattle, Washington:</u></b></p> <p><b>Seattle Central College Plaza</b>  ‘Refuse Fascism Seattle’ held a ‘Rise Up 4 Abortion Rights’ protest that started at <a href="#">Capitol Hill's</a> Seattle Central College Plaza along Broadway Ave. Saturday.</p> <p><i>"It is clear that the current majority of the Supreme Court is putting their extreme ideological agenda above the rights of all Americans by overturning what several of the current justices said was ‘settled law’ under oath in their confirmation hearings," a statement from the organization read in Wednesday's press release. "This outcome is as dangerous as it is unprecedented, and will open the floodgates for the Supreme Court to reverse other fundamental civil rights decisions. We believe that family planning and reproductive health decisions should be left to individuals"</i></p> <p><b>Cal Anderson Park</b>  Thousands joined a rally in Cal Anderson Park in Seattle's Capitol Hill neighborhood to support abortion rights Saturday.</p>

Organizers had expected around 4,000 people to attend, but the number exceeded those expectations. The massive crowd stood in solidarity with other groups nationwide, calling to protect a person's right to access to abortion.

*"Today people are coming out all across the country and right here in Seattle," said Courtney Normand, Washington State Director of Planned Parenthood Alliance Advocates. "People are really outraged to hear what the Supreme Court is poised to do this year. They are going to very likely overturn our constitutional right to an abortion in this country. The result of that is 36 million American women and people that can become pregnant losing access to this most basic fundamental healthcare."*

### **Multiple local abortion rights rallies happening around Western Washington this weekend**

#### **Olympia, Washington:**

##### **Washington State Capitol Building**

Abortion rights supporters gathered for a "Bans Off Our Bodies" day of action in support of abortion access and reproductive freedom on Saturday.

The event was organized by Women's March, UltraViolet, Planned Parenthood, and MoveOn, in partnership with SEIU, ACLU, NARAL and Liberate Abortion.

#### **Everett, Washington:**

##### **Snohomish County Courthouse Plaza**

Women's rights and abortion rights supporters gathered for a "Bans Off Our Bodies" mega rally at the Snohomish County Courthouse Plaza and Amphitheater on Saturday.

According to the Everett groups' press release, 300 people were signed up to participate in the event, organized by Snohomish County Indivisible, as early as Wednesday.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/14 Seattle reshapes city council districts</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/neighborhoods-like-yesler-terrace-could-see-changes-as-seattle-reshapes-city-council-districts/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/neighborhoods-like-yesler-terrace-could-see-changes-as-seattle-reshapes-city-council-districts/</a>
GIST	<p>Most people looking down Yesler Way on a wet spring day see a busy street lined with rain-soaked sidewalks, tulip trees and apartment buildings. Not NiRae Petty.</p> <p>She sees a political border cleaving through a diverse neighborhood long known for welcoming people of all backgrounds. Since Seattle moved seven City Council seats to geographic representation <a href="#">in 2015</a>, a boundary between council districts has run along Yesler Way between Interstate 5 and 12th Avenue, separating one part of Yesler Terrace from the other.</p> <p>That means the neighborhood's collective voice has been divided at City Hall, said Petty, a community advocate with the Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle who lives on the edge of Yesler Terrace. She's working to increase awareness about a wonky but important process underway right now: <a href="#">Redrawing</a> the council districts for the first time.</p> <p>"It's crazy how, when the council districts were drawn, the map split this area," while respecting the cohesion of most other Seattle neighborhoods, she said, perched at a picnic table in Yesler Terrace Park <a href="#">with a sweeping view</a> of Beacon Hill, Sodo and downtown. "It's confusing to me."</p> <p>Petty is trying to find out what Yesler Terrace residents think about redistricting before a special commission adjusts <a href="#">the current map</a> later this year. For example, would they rather be united with the Central District or with the South End?</p> <p>Yesler Terrace is located next to the Central District, the historical heart of Black Seattle. But the Central District has changed dramatically in recent times, partly due to gentrification. Yesler Terrace, where the</p>

first racially integrated public housing complex in the country opened [in 1941](#), has been [undergoing redevelopment](#) since 2013.

The sprawling complex of aging row houses, a landing spot for multiple waves of immigrants and refugees, has been bulldozed to make way for a mid-rise community [that includes](#) new public housing and market-rate apartments, occupied by low-income families and high-income techies.

Personally, Petty feels a connection between Yesler Terrace and the South End, where many of Seattle's people of color live. She moved there from the Central District when she was growing up. But other Yesler Terrace residents may feel differently, she noted.

"What's most important in this process is to hear everybody," she said.

### **Draft maps**

Yesler Terrace is a relatively small part of Seattle's political puzzle. But redistricting will involve changes in many areas and could alter the power balance at City Hall, with neighborhoods such as Georgetown and Madison Park up for grabs and with elections looming in 2023.

Voters approved the district system with a city charter amendment [in 2013](#). The current map was drawn for the charter amendment campaign by a retired University of Washington geography professor using 2010 census data. The city's population has grown unevenly since then, with some neighborhoods adding residents faster than others.

Redistricting will ensure each council district contains about 105,000 people, per 2020 census data.

District 1 (West Seattle), District 2 (South Seattle), District 5 (North Seattle) and District 6 (Northwest Seattle) grew relatively slowly, so they must expand geographically. District 3 (Capitol Hill and Central District), District 4 (Northeast Seattle) and District 7 (downtown, Queen Anne and Magnolia) grew faster so they must relinquish territory.

The new map will be drawn, as prescribed in the city charter, by a five-member [redistricting commission](#) that then-Mayor Jenny Durkan and the City Council appointed last year.

The work won't wrap up until November, but the commission has already released four [draft maps](#) that demonstrate just how much Seattle's political landscape could change.

Three of the maps would expand District 1 across the Duwamish Waterway to include Georgetown, which tends to support left-lane candidates in Seattle elections. That might help District 1 Councilmember Lisa Herbold retain her seat in 2023 against a more conservative challenger.

Three of the maps would expand District 4 across the Lake Washington Ship Canal to include Madison Park, including the Broadmoor gated community that tends to support middle-lane and conservative candidates. That might help District 4 Councilmember Alex Pedersen win reelection against a more progressive challenger.

Downtown will likely be carved between districts as District 7 loses territory. District 7's population grew an astounding 42% from 2010 to 2020, thanks in large part to a residential construction boom in Denny Triangle and South Lake Union.

The draft maps are conversation starters, rather than serious proposals, cautioned Elsa Batres-Boni, an adviser from the Department of Neighborhoods. But advocates like Petty at the Urban League (a nonprofit that supports and advocates for Black people and other people of color) are digging in. The Urban League is part of a coalition called Redistricting Justice for Seattle, an affiliate of [Redistricting Justice for Washington](#), which lobbies for city, legislative and congressional districts that account for people of color and tribal members.

Andrew Hong, the coalition's coordinator, is keeping an eye on the Chinatown International District and Beacon Hill, he said, arguing both neighborhoods should probably remain in District 2, where many Asian American voters live.

The charter says the new lines should follow the existing lines, waterways and recognized geographic boundaries "to the extent practical," while also taking neighborhoods into account. The districts should be compact and contiguous, [the charter says](#). The redistricting commission [plans to](#) release a final proposal in August and solicit public comments in September and October before finalizing a new map.

### Neighborhood views

Few people know Yesler Terrace as well as [Kristin O'Donnell](#), who moved to the neighborhood in 1974. The area deserves a council member dedicated to hyperlocal concerns, like youth programs, crosswalks and shootings at a nearby homeless encampment, she said.

But Yesler Terrace hasn't benefited much from the district system, said O'Donnell, 81. Shared between District 2 Councilmember Tammy Morales and District 3 Councilmember Kshama Sawant, the neighborhood should be getting extra attention, she said.

"The disadvantage is that you're on the border," she said.

Another longtime resident, Seraj Gemmechu, agrees that representation matters. He supported Mayor Bruce Harrell in [last year's election](#), he said, because Harrell showed up at a community event.

"You have to know your leaders, when you need anything to change," he said, watching his children play at Yesler Terrace Park, steps from the apartment building where they live.

Most people with busy lives don't have the time and wherewithal to track political machinations like redistricting, however. Gemmechu, 40, didn't know about the process, he said.

That's what worries Petty, despite attempts by the redistricting commission to spread the word via educational sessions with community organizations and via a sequence of public forums that starts Sunday. Redistricting Justice for Seattle will host its own listening sessions, including one on [May 20](#), to supplement that outreach.

"We have to come up with something now that's going to last for another 10 years, and our communities aren't even aware," Petty said.

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HEADLINE	05/14 Tri-Cities deaths from Covid complications
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/its-not-just-elderly-still-dying-from-covid-in-tri-cities-weekly-death-report-shows/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/its-not-just-elderly-still-dying-from-covid-in-tri-cities-weekly-death-report-shows/</a>
GIST	<p>Three more residents of the Tri-Cities area have died from complications of COVID-19, and it is not only the elderly who are dying.</p> <p>The deaths announced this week by the Benton Franklin Health District were of two men in their 40s and a man in his 50s.</p> <p>They come as the death toll from COVID-19 in the nation reaches 1 million people.</p> <p>The latest Tri-Cities deaths were despite low rates of confirmed disease in Benton and Franklin counties and low numbers of hospital patients with COVID-19.</p> <p>Although numbers are low, they have increased over the past month.</p>

They bring COVID deaths announced this month to five. The health district announces the deaths once a week.

The number of deaths announced in April dropped to eight, down from 27 recent deaths reported in March and 43 in February.

The total deaths from complications of COVID-19 in the Tri-Cities area since the start of the pandemic number 682. They include 468 residents of Benton County and 214 residents of Franklin County.

The most recent deaths included two Benton County men, including the man in his 50s, and a Franklin County man.

In the Tri-Cities, local public health officials verify that deaths are due to COVID complications by checking for a positive test result and that a coronavirus infection was named as a primary cause of death on the death certificate.

It can take several weeks for the district to receive and reconcile death information due to the reporting processes of medical facilities and coroner offices and the process of issuing and releasing death certificates.

Statewide, 12,791 residents have died of complications of COVID since the start of the pandemic, including 75 deaths reported in the last week, according to data from the Washington state Department of Health.

The rate of new confirmed COVID-19 cases has been higher in May than in April, but the past week ended with the case rate flat.

The Benton Franklin Health District reported a case rate for both Benton and Franklin counties combined of 44 new cases per 100,000 people in a week.

That is up from a case rate that dropped to a recent low of 17 a month ago, but the latest case rate remains far below all the previous peaks of the pandemic.

“Lately we’ve really enjoyed a long period of time when rates were very, very low,” Heather Hill, infectious disease supervisor for the Benton Franklin Health District, speaking on the Kadlec on Call podcast this week.

At the free community testing sites on George Washington Way in Richland and Columbia Basin College in Pasco a 15% increase has been observed in positive test results over previous weeks, she said.

The percentage of positive test results remains low, however.

In addition, data from testing wastewater from treatment plants in the Richland, Kennewick, Pasco and West Richland shows an increasing amount of genetic material from the virus, although the increase has flattened some this month.

It remains at its highest point of the spring.

Public health officials continue to keep a close eye on data from all sources, knowing there is a potential for another spike in cases if a new and more contagious variant of the coronavirus could start to spread, Hill said.

COVID in schools, hospitals

There are new cases from contact in school classrooms Hill said. However, the most recent dashboards of the Kennewick, Richland and Pasco school districts reported only 42 cases.

Public health officials are concerned about school proms this month.

Hill called proms the perfect environment for COVID-19 to spread with lots of young people indoors in close proximity to each other.

However, most concerning to Benton Franklin Health District are continued outbreaks in long-term care centers, such as nursing homes, in the Tri-Cities area. The elderly are vulnerable to severe and life-threatening cases of COVID-19.

The cases are being seen often in elderly residents who have not gotten their second COVID-19 booster shot, Hill said.

People age 50 and older are eligible for a second COVID-19 booster shot.

Benton and Franklin counties have long lagged the state of Washington in COVID-19 vaccination rates, and the percent of people eligible for an initial COVID-19 booster shot, is no exception.

In Washington state, 58.6% of people eligible for an initial booster, those age 12 and older, had received it.

The percentage drops to 50.5% in Benton County and just 42.5% in Franklin County.

Franklin County is catching up with Benton County in the rate of people age 5 and older who have completed their primary series of COVID-19 shots.

Statewide 72.3% of people 5 and older have their initial vaccinations. That drops to 60% in Benton County and 57.1% in Franklin County.

The number of people in hospitals in Benton and Franklin counties with COVID has about doubled over the past three weeks, but remains low at about 2% of all patients.

In the last week for which data were available, 13 people were admitted for treatment of COVID-19 at hospitals in Richland, Kennewick, Pasco and Prosser. That's up from as few as seven reported about three weeks ago.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/14 Thousands rally abortion rights Seattle park</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/abortion-rights-supporters-demonstrate-in-seattle-and-across-the-u-s/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/abortion-rights-supporters-demonstrate-in-seattle-and-across-the-u-s/</a>
GIST	<p>Several thousand people flooded Seattle's Cal Anderson Park on Saturday, carrying signs reading "Abortion is health care" and "Hands off my uterus," part of rallies nationwide in defense of abortion rights.</p> <p>Organized by local abortion providers and advocates, the Seattle event drew supporters of all ages, women sharing stories about their experiences with abortion, and a presence from an array of progressive groups, including Planned Parenthood, the American Civil Liberties Union of Washington, Northwest Abortion Access Fund and several socialist groups.</p> <p>Supporters joined a chant of "Bans off our bodies." Several donned "Handmaid's Tale" costumes, and one wore a T-shirt reading "Don't tread on me" — signs of resistance to the <a href="#">leaked draft U.S. Supreme Court opinion</a> that would overturn Roe v. Wade and, advocates say, bring a dangerous rollback of civil rights and established rights to privacy.</p> <p>In the crowd, 79-year-old Naomi Rhoads said she had an abortion in her late 20s, before Roe, and now sees the country sliding backward.</p>

“My family had enough money. They put me on a plane to London,” Rhoads said. There, Rhoads saw “six women who had been on the plane” also seeking abortions.

“It is very clear to me from that experience that laws against abortion only affect poor women and poor families and they are a war against the poor,” said Rhoads, a retired acupuncturist and massage therapist. “Because the wealthy ones and even the middle-class ones will find a way to get [an] abortion done by a medical professional.”

Nationwide, more than 380 events were scheduled Saturday, organizers said, including in Everett and Olympia. Thousands of abortion-rights supporters also rallied [at the Idaho State Capitol](#).

After the demonstration wrapped up on Seattle’s Capitol Hill, more than 1,000 demonstrators marched toward downtown and through Pike Place Market, led by the group Rise Up 4 Abortion Rights. “Not the church. Not the state. People will decide their fate,” the group chanted near Seventh Avenue and Pine Street.

The crowd grew to span several blocks as tourists looked on. A woman carrying a white plastic Chukar Cherries bag left the sidewalk to join the march briefly. Under one of the iconic “Public Market” signs, marchers laid down in a “die in” to underscore the dangers of illegal abortions.

U.S. Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., offered support for the protests. “We have no choice but to keep fighting — that’s what people across the country are turning out to do,” Murray said in a statement.

Dasha Oluokun, 20, came to Cal Anderson Park with a homemade sign that said, “Let’s Talk About the Elephant in the Womb,” a reference to Republicans opposing abortion. “I hope protests around all the major cities, not only in Washington but in the United States, can make the Supreme Court turn their head,” Oluokun said.

If Roe v. Wade is overturned, abortion laws would not change in Washington, where the state legalized abortions in 1970 and a 1991 ballot measure [codified Roe v. Wade into state law](#).

But the state [likely would see an influx](#) of people traveling from other states, including Idaho, where it [would become a felony](#) to perform an abortion except for narrow exceptions. To boost access, some advocates hope to see Washington state set aside funding to help cover the costs of abortion, similar to a [\\$15 million plan in Oregon](#).

“We must make it obvious and known that we are a sanctuary state,” said Dawn Dailey, 46, unfurling a massive sign on the lawn reading, “Save Roe.”

At the same time, Dailey said, “we must realize we, too, are at risk of having legislation overturned in this state” if conservative lawmakers gain influence.

Dailey said she became a parent as a teenager because she grew up in a religious area with “paternalistic, patriarchal pressures and expectations” and little access to abortion.

“I suffered housing and food and health care instabilities and poverty until I was able to finish school and gain a higher education,” Dailey said. “I don’t think anyone else should have those rights taken away from them.”

On stage, state Sen. Emily Randall, D-Bremerton, applauded state efforts to protect abortion access, but noted Republicans have controlled the state Senate in the past.

Protecting access in one state is not enough, Oluokun said. “I know I’m safe right now, but let’s say I move somewhere that’s more affordable, like Texas, then yes I would be afraid of my right to be able to get an abortion. I’m definitely scared for other people.”



	<p>Oluokun, who lives in Tacoma, said her mom became pregnant at 14 years old, wasn't ready and had an abortion. "Then she got pregnant with me at 20 and felt it was the right time."</p> <p>"She said that she felt like that experience made her ready to have me," Oluokun said, adding later, "I've never gotten pregnant, but if I had, I would want the ability to choose."</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>05/13 Burned-out nurses push back</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://finance.yahoo.com/news/burnt-nurses-push-back-staff-150157345.html">https://finance.yahoo.com/news/burnt-nurses-push-back-staff-150157345.html</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>(Bloomberg) -- Fallout from the nursing shortage that's plaguing U.S. hospitals got so bad that 16% of the nurses at one western Pennsylvania facility left last year, and 220 of those remaining staged a five-day walkout that halted elective surgery.</p> <p>Sandra Harrison, an operating room nurse who's spent her 39-year career at ACMH Hospital, teared up as she recounted working without even a lunch break and years of missed family and events. Her colleague, Stephanie Barrett, is exhausted from doing two, three and sometimes four jobs at a time. "I think pretty much almost everybody has considered, if not leaving health care altogether, taking a different path in nursing," Barrett said. "I don't know anybody who hasn't."</p> <p>The nurses said during the March walkout they're tired of caring for too many patients in 160 beds with too few people. About 5,000 nurses in Palo Alto, California won a new contract after going on strike last month, citing similar complaints.</p> <p>The rebellions reflect the exhaustion and frustration that's led to a national wave of nurses quitting even as the need has surged. It predates the pandemic, and it's not likely to get better by itself: The U.S. forecasts an annual average of 194,500 openings for registered nurses through 2030.</p> <p>Hospitals and nurses agree there's a shortage, and that it's bad for the patients. Sometimes they die as a result. What the two sides don't agree on is the solution.</p> <p>Nursing groups say conditions worsened by the pandemic existed for years, and the cure is to set minimum staff levels. Hospitals say mandates can magnify shortages and deny them control of their largest expense as they fight for their own survival. The idea nevertheless is gaining traction.</p> <p>"It is important if we want to reduce fatalities, if we want to eliminate harm, the kinds of accidents that can happen in hospitals," said Illinois Rep. Jan Schakowsky, who's pushing a national bill to set minimums. "We know that patients do better. Mortality is significantly decreased."</p> <p><b>Costs Spike</b></p> <p>The American Hospital Association's nursing affiliate has called mandates "a static and ineffective tool that cannot guarantee a safe health care environment or quality level," and said they don't account for variables such as how sick patients are.</p> <p>What's more, hospitals say they can't afford mandates. The pandemic battered their already-tight finances, shutting down elective surgery and spiking costs for labor and supplies. The association figures the outbreak cost members at least \$400 billion.</p> <p>Consulting firm Kaufman Hall said a third of U.S. hospitals were losing money last year, and Harold Miller, an adjunct professor and former associate dean at Carnegie Mellon University, estimated at least 40% of U.S. rural hospitals, about 800, are at high or imminent risk of closing. That's on top of 104 from all regions that shut in the past four years, according to the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission.</p>

The federal funding programs now winding down gave hospitals some breathing room but didn't fix underlying issues like inadequate government reimbursements, said Diane Rafferty, managing director at the Alvarez & Marsal turnaround firm. "You're going to see hospital closures," she said.

That probably means more pressure to cut staff, but fewer nurses mean more deaths. "We've been saying this for 30 years and the findings are irrefutable," said Linda Aiken, a University of Pennsylvania professor who researches the issue. A year-long study she co-authored found mortality for 201,493 Illinois Medicare patients rose 16% for each added person nurses had to oversee. A 4-to-1 patient ratio would have saved about 1,595 lives and \$117 million, in part by shortening stays, the paper concluded.

States have earmarked billions of dollars for retention payments, signing bonuses and education assistance. Still, hospitals sometimes must pay temp agencies hundreds of dollars an hour to fortify their ranks. Nurses at ACMH said recruits sometimes sign on and leave after a short time.

Moral hazard plays a role in the turnover, said Gerard Brogan, nursing practice director at the National Nurses United union and its California chapter. It's the distress nurses feel because they can't do their best for their patients.

Barrett, 36, says she's already considered a senior nurse in her ACMH unit after only six years. She often finds herself watching heart monitors and caring for patients in hallways, some held in the ER for days because beds weren't available. "I've had 15 patients at one time," she said.

#### Rural Care

The hospital's hometown, Kittanning, population 3,789, is the seat of Armstrong County, a mix of farms and old coal and oil towns. It's flanked by the Allegheny River, with a handsome courthouse on a hill and gourmet coffee that would stand up in New York and Seattle, but also a downtown dotted by vacancies and a Dollar General store.

"Health care in rural Pennsylvania is a major issue," said John Fetterman, the lieutenant governor and US Senate candidate, who saw the hospital in his small town close when he was mayor. He called minimum staffing "fundamental to patient safety, fundamental to prevent nurse burnout."

But staffing "is one component of the issue and one component of the solution," said Rafferty, who holds degrees in nursing and healthcare administration and served as an interim hospital CEO.

#### Cutting Back

For example, she said, hospitals may cut back on other items like equipment to meet mandates, and some in California have eliminated staffers who did tasks like bathing patients, leaving registered nurses to do them.

As for retention, Rafferty said nurses today have other options such as telehealth and management, not to mention other career choices. To keep nurses in the field, hospitals need to provide mentoring and career paths, she said. Affiliations with nursing schools would help, too.

ACMH didn't respond to requests for comment. Pennsylvania's hospital association opposes the staffing bill, saying state and federal laws exist to ensure patient safety and that setting mandates amid a shortage could force shutdowns, said spokesman Liam Migdail. His group says the state averages vacancies of 27% for nurses who directly care for patients.

#### California Mandate

While Pennsylvania is one of a handful of states weighing staffing laws, California is the only state that passed one. Annual turnover has been a fraction of other states' since the law was enacted in 2004, and nursing injuries and patient re-admissions plunged too, Brogan said.

	“It’s saving hospitals money,” he said, citing a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation study estimating costs to replace and train a nurse at \$40,000 to \$85,000. But because executive turnover is so frequent, “we’re in the short-term profit zeitgeist.”
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HEADLINE	<b>05/14 Demoralized: Russia troops injure selves</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.yahoo.com/now/let-someone-whack-russian-troops-151621158.html">https://www.yahoo.com/now/let-someone-whack-russian-troops-151621158.html</a>
GIST	<p>Nearly 90 days into <a href="#">Vladimir Putin’s</a> “special military operation” in Ukraine, <a href="#">Russian troops</a> have apparently become so demoralized and desperate to quit they’ve begun deliberately injuring themselves.</p> <p>The Ukrainian Defense Ministry’s Main Intelligence Directorate on Saturday released <a href="#">audio of what it said was an intercepted call</a> revealing the batshit new trend.</p> <p>A man identified as a Russian soldier in an air assault brigade based in Ukraine’s Kherson region can be heard venting his frustrations to his mother and explaining why he wants to abandon the fight.</p> <p>“Why would they [the Ukrainians] surrender? We’re on their land,” the soldier tells his mother. “This won’t end anytime soon. What the hell do I need this for? At 20 years old... I’m not at all interested in Ukraine. I need to come back and resign,” he says.</p> <p>His astonished mother asks why there are no Russian troops in Ukraine determined to continue the fight for the sake of “patriotism,” but the soldier, Nikita, just scoffs.</p> <p>“I had a commander... who shot himself in the leg just to get out of here. And that was in the very beginning! What is there to talk about? He served in Chechnya.”</p> <p>His shocked mother goes on to argue that someone must “defend Russia” to stop the West from attacking, echoing the Kremlin narrative dominant on Russia’s state-controlled news that Putin’s war was launched to stop an imminent NATO assault.</p> <p>“They will just kill us all, it’ll be World War Four and Russia will lose!” she declares.</p> <p>“Well, then Putin will maybe change his mind... There are no people, there’s no ammunition,” he said, adding that his own commander had sent letters trying to get his brigade pulled out, to no avail.</p> <p>He said less than 50 percent of his brigade was left.</p> <p>“Our people are just disappearing on their own. Some of them vanished without a trace, some were taken prisoner, some are hiding, some are already in Russia,” he said.</p> <p>The tapped phone chat was not the only one to suggest Russian troops are taking desperate measures to escape the war. In a <a href="#">similar recording released by Ukrainian intelligence</a> Friday, a woman identified as the wife of a Russian soldier urges him to “fall off a tank.”</p> <p>“There’s no way out,” she says. “Otherwise you will be there until September... They will not swap you out, because everyone is refusing.”</p> <p>“Well, clearly, what kind of stupid **** would come here?” he says.</p> <p>His wife argues a “fall from a tank” is just one option. “You just don’t need to shoot yourself in the leg, because who the **** knows how that would end. Or let someone whack you on your side,” she says, so that his kidneys would get injured. “I don’t **** know! Because you’d be able to go home straight from the hospital.”</p>

	<p>The purported soldier appears to seriously consider the proposal as he recalls how he and about 300 other troops took control of a village two days earlier, when he says a “**** of a battalion commander” ordered all the men to toss grenades into the basements of local homes, without checking who was inside first.</p> <p>“It’s good that they didn’t **** toss the grenades, because when the guys went in there were four little kids sitting there.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/14 Baby formula shortage stuns some states</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/baby-formula-shortage-stuns-states-including-tennessee-kansas-and-delaware-11652526002">https://www.wsj.com/articles/baby-formula-shortage-stuns-states-including-tennessee-kansas-and-delaware-11652526002</a>
GIST	<p>A <a href="#">nationwide shortage</a> has left parents driving long distances in search of formula to feed their babies. Nationally, 43% of baby formula is out of stock, with more than 30 states averaging above the U.S. level in the week that began May 1, up from 31% two weeks earlier, according to the latest figures from Datasembly, which tracks out-of-stock messages on retailers’ websites and apps. Normally, baby formula is 10% out of stock on average. Tennessee, Kansas and Delaware are among states seeing the <a href="#">worst of the shortage</a>.</p> <p>The shortage, caused by a mix of supply-chain problems and a recall, has led to <a href="#">empty shelves at some stores</a>, product restrictions and concern among parents and caregivers. Low-income families are especially affected. About half of infant formula nationwide is purchased by participants using Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) benefits, which provide food vouchers to pregnant or postpartum women and their young children, according to the White House. Metro areas in the South and Southwest, including Las Vegas and Houston, have been hit hard.</p> <p>Supply-chain issues caused by the Covid-19 pandemic have made baby formula harder to find for months. The shortage worsened after <a href="#">Abbott Laboratories</a>, a major formula manufacturer, voluntarily recalled some products and <a href="#">stopped production at a plant</a> in Sturgis, Mich., where Similac and its other brands were made. It was the sole manufacturer of some specialty formulas for children with allergies or special needs.</p> <p>About 25% of parents breast-feed their children through six months, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Doctors recommend that babies be fed formula or breast milk for the first year of life, meaning many parents rely on formula at some point.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/14 China withdraws as host 2023 Asian Cup</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/may/14/china-cites-pandemic-and-withdraws-as-host-of-2023/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/may/14/china-cites-pandemic-and-withdraws-as-host-of-2023/</a>
GIST	<p>KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia — <a href="#">China</a> withdrew as host of soccer’s 2023 Asian Cup on Saturday in the latest cancellation of the country’s sports hosting duties during the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>The Asian Football Confederation praised Chinese soccer officials for making “this very difficult but necessary decision in the collective interests of the AFC Asian Cup.”</p> <p>The 24-nation tournament was due to be played in 10 cities in mostly newly built stadiums in June and July of next year.</p> <p>China’s withdrawal could let Qatar or Saudi Arabia step up as hosts while both are bidding in a contest to host the 2027 edition. India and Iran are also candidates for the 2027 edition with a decision expected early next year.</p> <p>Qatar has stadiums in place to host the 2022 World Cup kicking off in November. However, a June 2023 start for the Asian Cup could be unlikely because of the extreme heat in the Qatari summer, making early 2024 a better option.</p>

	<p>The quadrennial Asian Cup is traditionally played in January and February. Qatar (2011) and Australia (2015) hosted the tournament when it was played in January, while the 2019 event in the United Arab Emirates was held from Jan. 5 to Feb. 1.</p> <p>Qatar is the defending champion after it upset Japan 3-1 in the 2019 final to earn the country's first major soccer title.</p> <p>China was due to host the 2022 Asian Games in Hangzhou in September but that was postponed along with nearly all international sports events in the country. China did host the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing though under a strict lockdown for athletes and officials with few fans able to attend.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>05/14 South Africa faces new Covid surge</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/may/14/south-africa-in-new-surge-of-covid-from-versions-o/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/may/14/south-africa-in-new-surge-of-covid-from-versions-o/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>JOHANNESBURG — South Africa is experiencing a surge of new COVID-19 cases driven by two omicron sub-variants, according to health experts.</p> <p>For about three weeks the country has seen increasing numbers of new cases and somewhat higher hospitalizations, but not increases in severe cases and deaths, said Professor Marta Nunes, a researcher at Vaccine and Infectious Diseases Analytics at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital in Soweto.</p> <p>“We’re still very early in this increase period, so I don’t want to really call it a wave,” Nunes said. “We are seeing a slight, a small increase in hospitalizations and really very few deaths.”</p> <p>South Africa’s new cases have gone from an average of 300 per day in early April to about 8,000 per day this week. Nunes says the actual number of new cases is probably much higher because the symptoms are mild and many who get sick are not getting tested.</p> <p>South Africa’s new surge is from two variations of omicron, BA.4 and BA.5, which appear to be very much like the original strain of omicron that was first identified in South Africa and Botswana late last year and swept around the globe.</p> <p>“The majority of new cases are from these two strains. They are still omicron ... but just genomically somewhat different,” said Nunes. The new versions appear to be able to infect people who have immunity from earlier COVID infections and vaccinations but they cause generally mild disease, she said. In South Africa, 45% of adults are fully vaccinated, although about 85% of the population is thought to have some immunity based on past exposure to the virus.</p> <p>“It looks like the vaccines still protect against severe disease,” Nunes said.</p> <p>Nunes said that the BA.4 and BA.5 strains of omicron have spread to other countries in southern Africa and a few European countries, but it is too early to tell if they will spread across the globe, as omicron did.</p> <p>The increase in COVID cases is coming as South Africa is entering the Southern Hemisphere’s colder winter months and the country is seeing a rise in cases of flu.</p> <p>At a COVID testing center in the Chiawelo area of Soweto, many people come in to be tested for COVID, but find out they have flu.</p> <p>“Now we’re in flu season ... so it’s flu versus COVID-19,” said Magdeline Matsoso, site manager at the Chiawelo vaccination center. She said people come for testing because they have COVID symptoms.</p> <p>“When we do the tests, you find that the majority of them, they are negative when it comes to COVID, but they do have flu symptoms,” said Matsoso. “So they get flu treatment and then they go home because the majority is related to flu and not COVID.”</p>

	<p>Vuyo Lumkwani was one of those who came to get tested.</p> <p>“I wasn’t feeling well when I woke up this morning. I woke up with body pains, a headache, blocked (nose), feeling dizzy, so I decided to come here,” she said.</p> <p>“I was terrified about my symptoms because I thought it might be COVID-19, but I told myself that I’d be OK because I have been vaccinated,” said Lumkwani. She said she was relieved to be diagnosed with flu and advised to go home with some medications and rest.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/13 Dismantling aging nuclear plants</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2022/05/13/holtec-oyster-creek-nuclear-plant-cleanup/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2022/05/13/holtec-oyster-creek-nuclear-plant-cleanup/</a>
GIST	<p>FORKED RIVER, N.J. — The new owner took over the Oyster Creek Nuclear Generating Station in 2019, promising to dismantle one of the nation’s oldest nuclear plants at minimal cost and in record time. Then came a series of worrisome accidents.</p> <p>One worker was struck by a 100-ton metal reactor dome. Another was splashed with radioactive water, according to internal incident reports and regulatory inspection reports reviewed by The Washington Post. Another worker drove an excavator into an electrical wire on his first day on the job, knocking out power to 31,000 homes and businesses on the New Jersey coast, according to a police report and the local power company.</p> <p>All three incidents occurred on the watch of Holtec International, a nuclear equipment manufacturer based in Jupiter, Fla. Though the company until recently had little experience shutting down nuclear plants, Holtec has emerged as a leader in nuclear cleanup, a burgeoning field riding an expected wave of closures as licenses expire for the nation’s aging nuclear fleet.</p> <p>Over the past three years, Holtec has purchased three plants in three states and expects to finalize a fourth this summer. The company is seeking to profitably dismantle them by replacing hundreds of veteran plant workers with smaller, less-costly crews of contractors and eliminating emergency planning measures, documents and interviews show. While no one has been seriously injured at Oyster Creek, the missteps are spurring calls for stronger government oversight of the entire cleanup industry.</p> <p>In the nearly three years Holtec has owned Oyster Creek, regulators have documented at least nine violations of federal rules, including the contaminated water mishap, falsified weapons inspection reports and other unspecified security lapses. That’s at least as many as were found over the preceding 10 years at the plant, when it was owned by Exelon, one of the nation’s largest utility companies, according to The Post’s review of regulatory records.</p> <p>Joseph Delmar, a spokesman for Holtec, defended the company’s record, saying it takes safety and security seriously. The recent incidents “are not reflective of the organization’s culture,” he said, adding that the worker who knocked down the power line “did not follow the proper safety protocols.” Delmar said the company has decades of experience building equipment to store nuclear waste and employs veteran plant workers to dismantle reactor sites.</p> <p>“While the decommissioning organization may seem new, the professionals staffing the company are experienced nuclear professionals with intimate knowledge of the plants they work at,” Delmar said in an emailed statement.</p> <p>Holtec is, however, pioneering an experimental new business model. During the lifetime of America’s 133 nuclear reactors, ratepayers paid small fees on their monthly energy bills to fill decommissioning trust funds, intended to cover the eventual cost of deconstructing the plants. Trust funds for the country’s 94 operating and 14 nonoperating nuclear reactors now total about \$86 billion, according to Callan, a San Francisco-based investment consulting firm.</p>

After a reactor is dismantled and its site cleared, some of these trust funds must return any money left over to ratepayers. But others permit cleanup companies to keep any surplus as profit — creating incentives to cut costs at sites that house some of the most dangerous materials on the planet.

Even after reactors are shut down, long metal rods containing radioactive pellets — known as spent fuel — are stored steps away, in cooling pools and steel-and-concrete casks. Nuclear safety experts say that an industrial accident or a terrorist attack at any of these sites could result in a radiological release with severe impacts to workers and nearby residents, as well as to the environment.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the independent federal agency tasked with overseeing safety at nuclear sites, conducts regular inspections during the decommissioning process. But state and local officials say the NRC has failed to safeguard the public from risks at shut-down plants, deferring too readily to companies like Holtec.

“The NRC is not doing their job,” said Sen. Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.), who has pushed the agency to adopt stricter regulations around plant decommissioning. “We need a guaranteed system that prioritizes communities and safety, and we don’t have that right now.”

The NRC’s leadership is divided over the role regulators should play. The agency was created in 1974, as the first generation of commercial reactors was going online, and its rules were mainly designed to safeguard the operation of active plants and nuclear-material sites. As reactors shut down, the NRC began reducing inspections and exempting plants from safety and security rules.

Last November, the NRC approved a new rule that would automatically qualify shut-down plants for looser safety and security restrictions. Christopher T. Hanson, a Democrat nominated by President Donald Trump and promoted to the role of chairman by President Biden, has said the changes would improve the “effectiveness and efficiency” of the decommissioning process.

Commissioner Jeff Baran, also a Democrat, voted against the proposed rule and called for the NRC and local governments to play a bigger role. “Radiological risks remain at shutdown nuclear plants that must be taken seriously,” he cautioned in public comments. Baran added that the agency already takes a “laissez-faire” approach to decommissioning and that the new rule “would make the situation even worse, further skewing the regulation towards the interests of industry.”

Dan Dorman, the NRC’s executive director for operations, said in an email that the agency lifts restrictions at plants only if it determines the plant will continue to be safe. In addition to citing Holtec for violations at Oyster Creek, the agency has required the company to take corrective measures, including external security assessments of all its nuclear sites.

“Our increased oversight and the recent enforcement actions demonstrate our concern about the situation at Oyster Creek,” Dorman said.

Holtec faces mounting criticism beyond Oyster Creek. Michigan officials have said they worry Holtec will leave residents on the hook for cleanup costs at the Palisades plant on the shores of Lake Michigan. Massachusetts officials have protested Holtec’s plan to take 1 million gallons of contaminated water from the defunct Pilgrim power plant and dump it into Cape Cod Bay.

While Holtec acknowledges a funding shortfall at Palisades, Delmar says the fund will appreciate in value to cover the cost of the cleanup. At Pilgrim, Holtec has said the potential radiation dose from the Cape Cod release would be far less than the average traveler receives on a typical cross-country flight.

In the Southwest, Holtec has ignited a different controversy. As the company acquires old plants, it is proposing to ship the highly radioactive spent fuel to New Mexico, where it plans to build a storage facility. Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham (D) has vowed to fight the plan, telling Trump in a 2020 letter that storing radioactive material in the oil-rich Permian Basin region would be “economic malpractice.”



Holtec says it is working in partnership with a group of local officials who believe the benefits of the facility — including new jobs and investment — outweigh the risks. On its website, Holtec says the facility will provide “a safe, secure, temporary, retrievable, and centralized facility for storage of used nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste until such time that a permanent solution is available.”

The growing debate marks the latest twist in the tortured saga of nuclear power, which once was hailed as a miracle technology capable of producing large quantities of clean, affordable energy. In the early 1970s, the federal Atomic Energy Commission estimated that about 1,000 reactors would be built in the United States, and that nuclear sources eventually would provide at least half of the world’s power.

But those ambitions soon collided with fears about nuclear radiation, especially after disastrous meltdowns at Chernobyl in Ukraine and Fukushima in Japan. Nuclear energy peaked at around 18 percent of global electricity production in the 1990s and now comprises about 10 percent, according to the U.S. Energy Information Association.

Reactors in the United States initially were licensed for 40 years, and most were renewed for another 20 years. Of 94 reactors that are still active, licenses at over half are set to expire in the next two decades, according to Julia Moriarty, a senior vice president at Callan.

Recently, worries about climate change have led some governments to embrace nuclear as a low-carbon source of power. Biden has called nuclear essential to the nation’s climate goals, and Washington last year set aside \$6 billion for extending the licenses of some plants and \$2.5 billion for developing new nuclear technologies.

But the nation continues to puzzle over the problem of nuclear waste. This material, which emanates invisible but harmful radiation for hundreds of years, is stored in protective containers on the grounds of nuclear plants, scattered in dozens of towns across the country. A plan to build a national waste repository in Nevada’s Yucca Mountain stalled amid decades of political gridlock, leaving these towns saddled indefinitely with the threat of an accidental release or terrorist attack.

Holtec is approaching those communities with an offer to clean up the mess.

#### **‘Accelerated decommissioning’**

Founded and wholly owned by Kris Singh, an inventor and entrepreneur, Holtec says it is pioneering a new model of “accelerated decommissioning.” At the 24 U.S. reactors currently undergoing decommissioning, over half are expected to take two decades or more to complete the process, NRC data shows; Holtec pledges to return nuclear sites to safe, clean usable land in as few as eight years.

Singh did not respond to requests for comment, and Holtec did not make him available for an interview.

The company’s work at Oyster Creek, its first plant, was meant to be a blueprint for the national expansion, Holtec executives said in interviews with The Post in early 2020. Instead, safety advocates argue, it has served as a warning. Cost-cutting has left employees feeling overworked and prone to mistakes, according to two former plant workers who were both laid off by Holtec. They spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss their former employer.

The company has said in regulatory filings it plans to keep about \$85 million in profit from Oyster Creek’s \$826 million trust fund. It has already spent about one quarter of the fund.

Shortly after Holtec took over, regulators found problems with the plant’s weapons program. All nuclear plants must maintain weapons, such as guns and ammunition used by security personnel, and test them on a regular basis to secure the sites from attacks. According to an NRC investigation, a Holtec manager skipped the annual tests and falsified the weapons inspection reports to give the appearance the tests were conducted. The manager said in a letter to the NRC that he made mistakes on the company’s inspections

report because he had been “overwhelmed” following staff cuts, though he denied that anything was intentionally falsified.

“I went from a staff of six to a staff of two, all having extra responsibilities, doubling our workload and learning new criteria of the positions,” the manager said in the [letter](#), which was posted on the NRC’s website.

In a settlement with the NRC [announced](#) this year, Holtec agreed to pay a \$50,000 civil penalty, hire a new corporate security director and conduct external security assessments.

Delmar, the Holtec spokesman, said the “roots” of some safety incidents “go back to when the plant was operating and under previous ownership,” but declined to elaborate. The weapons manager, who was fired by Holtec last year, declined to comment.

Another incident took place in January 2020 on the reactor refueling floor — a cavernous space high up inside the building that houses the reactor, along with the gargantuan steel-and-concrete structures that protect its core. To remove these structures from the site, workers must cut them into smaller pieces.

As they were slicing the 100-ton reactor dome, the structure unexpectedly swung and struck one employee, according to an internal incident report reviewed by The Post. This person was nearly knocked down a 10-story equipment hatch, according to the two former employees, who didn’t witness the incident but were briefed on it afterward.

The manager overseeing the work had been responsible for three different teams that day and his “mind may have been elsewhere,” according to the report, which blamed the accident on “complacency.” The report described the incident as a “near miss” but did not mention the equipment hatch or the possibility of a fall.

Delmar said the accident occurred at least 100 feet from the equipment hatch, which he said had a guardrail around it. “Incidents like this are not normal, and unsafe work practices are unacceptable for any Holtec employee or contractor at our facilities,” he said.

The NRC evaluated the incident, but because it did not find any violations of nuclear safety, referred the matter to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Dorman said. Holtec said the company has heard nothing from OSHA, and no record of the incident could be found on OSHA’s online database. OSHA declined to comment and a request by The Post for such records is pending.

In February 2021, a faulty valve for a nuclear waste container unexpectedly flew into the air, leaking contaminated water on one worker, who took an internal dose of radiation, according to a federal inspection report. This probably means the worker ingested radioactive water through the eyes, nose, mouth or skin, nuclear safety experts said. The worker did not require medical attention because the dose was below the limits for people who work with radiation, Holtec said.

The incident could have been avoided if managers had fixed a problem with the snap rings that held the valve in place, regulators said in the inspection report. Holtec had “replaced the snap rings on prior occasions due to evidence of bending of the ring” but never recorded the action in its system so it would be fixed permanently, the NRC said. The regulators called this a very low-severity violation, because it was not willful or repeated.

Holtec has since modified the valve design and conducted new training, Delmar said.

### **A ‘gamble’**

Decommissioning is an unproven business with uncertain profits. The total saved in the nation’s decommissioning trust funds is currently smaller than the estimated cost of shutting them all down, according to Callan’s Moriarty.

“The gamble under all of this is you can do the cleanup for less than the amount of money that’s in the fund. Nobody has proved that yet,” said Gregory Jaczko, an appointee of President Barack Obama who headed the NRC from 2009 to 2012.

Some of the firms buying defunct nuclear power plants in the United States are backed by private equity, an industry with expertise in purchasing unwanted assets and improving their value, often by reducing costs. TriArtisan Capital Advisors, the investment firm that partly owns P.F. Chang’s and TGI Fridays, now owns the company decommissioning Pennsylvania’s Three Mile Island, site of the biggest nuclear meltdown in U.S. history.

Singh founded Holtec in the 1980s, when he saw that nuclear plants were running out of space to safely store radioactive fuel, according to Joy Russell, a senior vice president at Holtec and one of the company’s longest-tenured employees. A mechanical engineer who specialized in heat transfer, Singh became a pioneer of the nuclear industry by devising new systems for safely storing spent fuel rods, including metal racks that go inside cooling pools and steel-and-concrete cylinders that can store fuel for decades, Russell said in a 2020 interview.

In 2017, Holtec opened the doors of a stately new manufacturing center in Camden, N.J., that showcases Singh’s accomplishments. Employees arriving at the main office building on the Krishna P. Singh Technology Campus walk by a parking space reserved for the CEO’s chauffeured Rolls-Royce and into an atrium where more than 100 patents bearing Singh’s name are on display.

But the Camden campus also brought controversy. After opening the facility, Singh [complained](#) to an area paper that Camden residents “don’t show up to work” and “some of them get into drugs,” angering community leaders in the mostly Black and Hispanic city. Singh later apologized and said his comments were taken out of context.

The NRC has given Holtec permission to pare back safety and security requirements at its plants, including security personnel, cybersecurity, emergency planning, terrorist attack drills and accident insurance, according to documents on the agency’s website. In approving these requests, the NRC has accepted Holtec’s rationale that such measures are less crucial for retired plants, which experts agree do not carry the same radiological risk.

Some nuclear safety advocates say the NRC is being too deferential to Holtec and other companies. Years of research by the NRC itself shows plants are still vulnerable to a disaster after they shut down. In staff reports, the NRC has [said](#) severe accidents can result from mishandling spent fuel rods and that sites storing nuclear waste [remain vulnerable](#) to sabotage.

#### **A test case**

When Holtec announced its deal to acquire Oyster Creek, some local residents were uneasy about the plant becoming a test case for Holtec’s corporate expansion, said Janet Tauro, an environmental activist who lives 20 minutes north of the plant.

“When you are dealing with highly radioactive nuclear fuel and taking apart a nuclear power plant, you have to be infallible — there is no room for mistakes,” said Tauro, the New Jersey board chair of the nonprofit group Clean Water Action.

For 50 years, the plant’s towering gray chimney had been one of the area’s most distinctive physical landmarks. Its single reactor generated enough electricity to power 600,000 homes — roughly two New Jersey counties.

With the NRC’s blessing, Holtec shrank the plant’s emergency response staff, documents show. The plant lowered its on-site insurance from \$50 million to \$10 million and stopped providing funds to the surrounding community for emergency equipment, staff and training, because, the company said, hazards at the site had been reduced.

While rare, major accidents have occurred at nuclear waste sites with no operational reactor. In 2014, an explosion inside New Mexico’s underground repository for “low level” radioactive waste items, such as contaminated clothing and tools, led to 21 workers testing positive for internal contamination and some reporting respiratory problems, according to an [investigation](#) by the Energy Department. The entire site had to close for a three-year, \$2 billion cleanup.

The NRC’s Dorman said the agency still requires emergency planning measures on the premises of a shut-down nuclear plant, which he said provides ample resources to respond to accidents. However, the Federal Emergency Management Agency warned the NRC last year that having no dedicated personnel or equipment in neighboring communities “could have unfortunate consequences.”

Holtec’s Delmar said its exemptions at Oyster Creek “are consistent with other decommissioning sites” and “reflect the reduction in risk at each of the key points in the decommissioning process.”

Last summer, Holtec finished moving all of Oyster Creek’s spent fuel rods from cooling pools into dry storage containers in just 32 months — a “world record,” the company said in a news release. The process normally takes five years or more, but Holtec sped it up by building a fuel canister the company says can accommodate nuclear waste at hotter temperatures. After reviewing the company’s calculations, the NRC concluded it was safe to reduce the mandatory minimum cooling time to one year, filings show.

### **The future of waste**

In an empty cow pasture in the New Mexico desert, Holtec is attempting to write the next chapter of the American nuclear story. The company is in the final stages of getting NRC approval for an “interim” waste storage site designed to secure spent fuel from around the country in a shopping-mall-size bunker for up to 40 years.

In meetings with New Mexicans, Holtec representatives have said the facility would create jobs and fulfill an important national need. New Mexico Attorney General Hector Balderas (D) has sued the NRC, claiming the regulator “colluded with Holtec” by rubber-stamping its plans and ignoring potential environmental harms.

The NRC’s Dorman says the agency’s review of the Holtec site has been rigorous. The agency recently [approved](#) a separate, privately owned storage facility in Texas, a project that now faces legal challenges by that state. Holtec declined to comment.

“The NRC has not figured out a permanent solution” to nuclear waste, Balderas said in an interview. “They are using Holtec as a Band-Aid.”

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HEADLINE	<b>05/14 Court rules against detained immigrants</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-vi/2022/05/14/court-rules-against-detained-immigrants-says-they-have-fewer-rights/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-vi/2022/05/14/court-rules-against-detained-immigrants-says-they-have-fewer-rights/</a>
GIST	<p>Jose de la Cruz Espinoza came to the United States when he was 14; he and his wife run a landscaping business in Delaware and have four children, all U.S. citizens. On Feb. 9, 2020, at his brother’s house in Bel Air, Md., Espinoza got into a loud argument. His daughter called 911.</p> <p>Espinoza, 28, was ultimately released on his own recognizance. But he was immediately picked up by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and an immigration judge ruled that he would have to pay a \$20,000 bond to stay out of jail while fighting deportation.</p> <p>Unlike in criminal court, where the government has to prove that a person is a danger or a flight risk to keep them detained pending the adjudication of their legal case, the burden is on immigration detainees to convince a judge that they are neither. They also must make their case without a right to counsel, unlike defendants in criminal proceedings. If immigration detainees are granted bond, they must pay it all up front, and the court is not required to consider their ability to pay.</p>

Those differences pushed Espinoza to sue, along with two other immigrants incarcerated in Baltimore while pursuing asylum, backed by civil liberties groups and the law firm Sanford Heisler Sharp. A U.S. district court judge in Maryland [found that system unconstitutional](#) in 2020 and issued an injunction requiring the government to carry the burden of proof and immigration judges to consider a detainee's ability to pay for bond.

The judge was overruled Thursday by a three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 4th Circuit.

"Aliens facing removal proceedings, although entitled to due process under the Constitution, are not entitled to the same process as citizens," wrote Judges Julius N. Richardson and A. Marvin Quattlebaum Jr., both appointees of President Donald Trump. "Aliens are due less process when facing removal hearings than an ordinary citizen would have."

The Justice Department had argued that "the existing procedures afforded to noncitizens ... provide a meaningful opportunity to be heard" and that a single federal judge could not order new procedures for the whole state.

Ajibade Thompson Adegoke, 44, came to the United States from Nigeria on a tourist visa in 2017 and stayed, working as a driver. Adegoke was arrested in Baltimore in 2019, after what his lawyers said was a mistaken accusation of shoplifting. The charge was dropped, but he was taken into ICE custody from jail. His bond was set at \$15,000, higher than he could pay.

Marvin Dubon Miranda, 37, came from El Salvador more than a decade ago. He was convicted of drunken driving in late 2019, arrested by ICE and held by an immigration judge without bond, based on what his attorneys say was a false assertion by the government that he had a domestic violence conviction.

"The reliance on unsubstantiated allegations of criminal conduct ... underscores the significant and detrimental impact that placing the burden of proof on a noncitizen has," attorneys for the ACLU of Maryland wrote in one court filing.

All three men were released from custody while the litigation was pending. The question of whether a judge can grant such sweeping relief to noncitizens was [argued before the Supreme Court](#) in January; a ruling has yet to be issued.

One of the 4th Circuit judges said he would not have considered the merits of the case at all, because it infringes on the attorney general's discretion to dictate how noncitizens are detained.

Judge Michael Urbanski, a district court judge who sat on the appellate panel, dissented.

"Placing the burden of proof on the government ... helps balance the fact that aliens seeking release have no right to counsel, speedy trial, or cross-examination," he wrote.

At oral argument, he emphasized that there is a difference between immigrants like these and those convicted of felony crimes that mandate removal from the country. The Supreme Court [in 2018 ruled](#) that people in mandatory immigration detention were not entitled to regular reviews of that status.

Nick Taichi Steiner, staff attorney with the ACLU of Maryland, said the group was "obviously disappointed with the result" of the 4th Circuit panel's opinion. There were more than 1,000 immigration court bond hearings where the district court judge's preliminary injunction applied over the past year, he said.

An appeal to the full bench of 4th Circuit judges is likely; in the meantime the injunction remains in effect. Simon Sandoval-Moshenberg of the Legal Aid Justice Center, an immigrant rights group that filed a brief in favor of the detainees, called the decision "a radical outlier" from other appellate courts.

	<p>“I hope it will be reversed quickly by the full Court of Appeals,” he said in an email. “The Biden Administration should not continue to press legal arguments that immigrants are somehow lesser ‘persons’ than U.S. citizens within the meaning of the Due Process Clause.”</p> <p>The Justice Department declined to comment.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/14 Formula factory: months from production</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2022/05/14/baby-formula-shortage-sturgis/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2022/05/14/baby-formula-shortage-sturgis/</a>
GIST	<p>Three and a half months after the U.S. Food and Drug Administration began an inspection and shutdown of Abbott Nutrition’s Sturgis, Mich., facility, machinery is still silent, no infant formula rolling off the production line.</p> <p>On the north side of the city of 10,000, nestled between the local airport and a neighborhood of one-story homes, Abbott is among the region’s biggest employers. Locals say they were shocked by allegations of unsanitary conditions that led to the shutdown, which has drastically reduced the availability of formula across the country and left parents scrambling to feed their newborns.</p> <p>“In the past, the employees would even talk about how, like, they’d have to gear up. And boy, if you went and touched something, you’d have to gear up again. So it really threw me for a loop when I heard about it,” said Cindy Conrod, standing behind the counter at her downtown Sturgis appliance shop.</p> <p>Experts say the formula crisis points to problems beyond conditions at the facility operated by Abbott, maker of Similac and the largest producer of milk formula in the country. For years, they have been warning that industry consolidation has left the production of formula — a highly regulated product that is notoriously difficult to manufacture — in the hands of a small number of makers vulnerable to this sort of disruption.</p> <p>Four major companies control 90 percent of the infant formula supply in the United States: Abbott, Mead Johnson, Gerber and Perrigo Nutritionals. Perrigo produces store-brand infant formulas for major stores including Walmart, Sam’s Club, Target, Kroger, CVS and Walgreens. Only three of these — Abbott, Mead Johnson and Gerber — hold the contracts for a food assistance program for mothers and young children called the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC). Benefit recipients are permitted to use only products made by the company contracted with their state. About half the total infant formula purchased is by WIC recipients.</p> <p>“How did these companies essentially build a monopoly? And each of these companies’ operations are also highly centralized so that when one facility goes offline for even a matter of weeks, you can have this ripple effect across the entire industry,” said Brian Dittmeier, senior director of public policy at the National WIC Association, a nonprofit advocacy group representing provider agencies and recipients.</p> <p>This is precisely what happened.</p> <p>In February, the FDA ordered Abbott to shut down its production facility in Sturgis, which produces Similac, EleCare and several other leading powdered formulas. Cronobacter bacteria had been found in infants who consumed formulas produced at the Sturgis plant. Two infants became sick, and two died. This prompted a voluntary recall by Abbott as well as an FDA inspection that found the plant did not maintain acceptable sanitary conditions.</p> <p>Abbott says that after a painstaking investigation, the FDA still has not been able to produce clear evidence linking its formulas to the infants’ illnesses and deaths. Abbott officials said they began implementing improvements and taking corrective actions before receiving the FDA’s letter detailing needed fixes on April 8. They have installed nonporous, easily cleanable and sanitary floors, added a 3D-augmented reality system to provide clearer images of product as it moves through the facility, and increased finished product sampling and testing.</p>



In a statement this week, the company said it can resume production within two weeks if the FDA signs off. Once the facility reopens, Abbott says it will take six to eight weeks before the product is available on shelves.

The FDA, however, says it is still investigating the facility. Among the deficiencies it found were water leaks and standing water on the floor, workers not wearing appropriate protective gear and a number of swabs in the facility that tested positive for *cronobacter sakazakii* bacteria, according to the FDA report. Abbott Nutrition did not respond to phone calls and an email asking for comment.

“The plant remains closed as the company works to correct findings related to the processes, procedures and conditions that the FDA observed during its inspection of the facility, which raised concerns that powdered infant formula produced at this facility prior to the FDA’s inspection carry a risk of contamination,” an FDA spokeswoman said.

Although the FDA has said it is working with Abbott and other manufacturers to bring safe products to the U.S. market, it is unclear when the facility will be allowed to reopen. In the meantime, parents of children who rely on formula. In April, grocery store shelves dipped 43 percent below full stock. Retailers are rationing popular brands.

On Friday, FDA Commissioner Robert M. Califf said the FDA intends to allow foreign manufacturers and suppliers to ship their formula into the United States — the FDA’s strict labeling guidelines previously made it hard for such companies to get their baby formula into the United States — as well as some additional flexibilities for domestic manufacturers and suppliers. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) announced that next week the House will take emergency action to allow WIC recipients to buy any available formula.

“We recognize that many consumers have been unable to access infant formula and critical medical foods they are accustomed to using and are frustrated by their inability to do so. We are doing everything in our power to ensure there is adequate product available where and when they need it,” Califf said Wednesday in a statement.

Experts say it wouldn’t be unusual for the FDA to take more than three months to close out such a significant investigation. Sarah Sorscher, deputy director of regulatory affairs at Center for Science in the Public Interest, said one challenge is that the FDA has yet to be able to identify the root cause of the contamination.

“They didn’t understand where or why the formula became contaminated, so they are grappling with corrective steps to take to prevent another outbreak,” she said. “There are a limited number of companies that can make these products and make them safely. So right now if you need a standard formula it’s a grim scavenger hunt and you may need to visit multiple stores, but the people in the toughest situation are those who require special formulas for rare metabolic problems. Parents are getting desperate.”

Most formulas are made from a mix of protein concentrate from cow’s milk, rice starch, corn syrup and oils. They are sold ready-to-drink and in powdered forms that must be reconstituted with water. Because the minimum amounts of protein, fat, calcium and a number of vitamins is so stringently regulated — many babies get 100 percent of their nutrition from formula for the first six months of life — a limited number of manufacturers have the ability to produce it effectively.

There are contamination risks associated with powdered formula, however. Parents could introduce contaminants via a dirty spoon, an improperly cleaned bottle or even from a water source. In testing of the sick infants’ homes, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found *cronobacter* bacteria on a bottle of distilled water used to mix the formula.

Some members of Congress have been frustrated by problems they see with both Abbott and the FDA. House Appropriations Committee Chair Rosa L. DeLauro (D-Conn.) has said she received a 34-page



report from a former Abbott employee who registered a litany of complaints about conditions at the plant with the FDA in October 2021. But the agency did not interview the whistleblower until late December, DeLauro said at a USDA hearing in April. The FDA began its inspection at the plant on Jan. 31, and the recall was issued on Feb. 17, according to FDA documents.

“Why did the FDA not spring into action? Why did it take four months to pull this formula off store shelves,” DeLauro said at a USDA hearing in April.

Peter Pitts, former FDA associate commissioner, said the situation illustrates “a serious problem across the FDA portfolio, where there are a limited number of manufacturers. Making baby formula is a sophisticated, expensive proposition, so consolidation is going to happen. The downside is when one of those facilities go offline.”

He pointed to other consolidated industries, such as the production of insulin for diabetes, where there are only three main producers. More competition, he said, would create greater resilience in the system.

Still, he said, “the FDA did the exact right thing. The FDA did not find any of the bacteria that sickened the children in Abbott’s product line, but Abbott admitted to lax safety protocols. The blame ultimately lies with Abbott to allow lax safety protocols.”

Dittmeier, with the National WIC Association, said that the shortfall of Abbott products has not been made up for by other manufacturers.

“They’ve promised ramped-up production for a number of weeks, yet it hasn’t translated to increased stock on the shelf,” he said, adding that formula is not evenly distributed nationally and that, anecdotally, rural grocery stores across the country have seen more empty baby formula shelves than urban ones.

Perrigo has run its formula facility at full capacity, 24 hours a day and seven days a week, said Bradley Joseph, vice president of corporate communications. He said that during the three months ending March 31, Perrigo shipped 37 percent more formula than the same period last year. Gerber is running formula factories at capacity to accelerate product availability to retailers and online, as well as to hospitals for those most vulnerable, said Gerber spokeswoman Dana Stambaugh. Mead Johnson did not respond to requests for comment Friday.

Abbott said it has prioritized infant formula production at its other plant in Columbus, Ohio, converting other liquid manufacturing lines into making liquid Similac.

For the millions of American families scrambling to find food for their babies, another 10 weeks is untenable — assuming the FDA grants swift approval for the facility to resume manufacturing.

The situation is particularly dire for the 1.2 million infants who receive formula benefits from WIC. In many parts of the country, shelves are bare of the products they are allowed to buy, and there are scant alternatives.

When in mid-February Abbott issued a nationwide baby formula recall and shut down operations at its Sturgis plant, it disproportionately affected the neediest American families.

For the states in which Abbott held major WIC contracts, the company agreed to honor the rebate for competitor products, meaning that families could substitute other items on store shelves for their approved WIC benefits and that Abbott would reimburse the state as if it were their own product. They have extended this agreement to the end of June, but if Abbott’s own products are not on the shelves by then, Dittmeier said, it is unclear what will happen.

“WIC will be limited in what they can cover,” he said.

HEADLINE	<b>05/14 Recall: Skittles, Starburst, Life Savers</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/05/14/Skittles-starburst-Life-Savers-gummy-candies-recalled/8351652553805/">https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/05/14/Skittles-starburst-Life-Savers-gummy-candies-recalled/8351652553805/</a>
GIST	<p>May 14 (UPI) -- The maker of Skittles, Starburst and Life Savers gummy candies has issued a voluntary recall of some of the products, warning of a "thin metal strand" inside the candies or in the bag.</p> <p>In a release <a href="#">issued Friday</a> in conjunction with the <a href="#">Food and Drug Administration</a>, Mars Wrigley Confectionary U.S. said the affected gummies were made by a third-party manufacturer and distributed in Canada, the United States and Mexico.</p> <p>The company said the recall was instituted after receiving reports from consumers, adding it is "not aware of any illnesses to date."</p> <p>Officials provided a table of manufacturing codes showing which specific products are included in the recall, available for reference as part of a <a href="#">company press release</a>.</p> <p>Mars Wrigley said it will work with retailers to remove recalled products from store shelves and urged consumers who believe they may have purchased the affected gummies to not eat them.</p> <p>Consumers with questions were told to contact the company by calling 1-800-651-2564 or by visiting <a href="#">its website</a>.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/14 Russia cuts off power supplies to Finland</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/05/14/finland-russia-power-supplies-party-backs-NATO-bid/1551652530601/">https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/05/14/finland-russia-power-supplies-party-backs-NATO-bid/1551652530601/</a>
GIST	<p>May 14 (UPI) -- Russian electricity suppliers on Saturday followed through on a threat to cut off power flows to Finland as the ruling Social Democratic Party officially backed joining the NATO alliance.</p> <p>State electricity operator Fingrid Oyj had warned that RAO Nordic Oy, a subsidiary of the Russian entity Inter RAO, would suspend imports of electricity to Finland starting at 1 a.m. Saturday, citing "problems in receiving payments for electricity sold on the market."</p> <p>Fingrid later confirmed to CNN and Radio France International the Russian supplier had indeed halted its power flows as threatened.</p> <p>The grid operator said Finland's power supplies have not been put under threat by the move -- in recent years, imported electricity from Russia has made up around 10% of the country's total consumption.</p> <p>"The lack of electricity import from Russia will be compensated by importing more electricity from Sweden and by generating more electricity in Finland," said Reima Päävinen, Fingrid's senior vice president of power system operations.</p> <p>The move came before the board of Finland's SDP met in Helsinki to consider backing a historic government proposal to join western defense alliance in the face of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>Sweden is also expected to put forward an application to join NATO -- its ruling Social Democrats are expected to make a decision Sunday.</p> <p>SDP Chairwoman Sirpa Paatero announced the Finnish party's board had voted by an overwhelming margin to back Prime Minister Sanna Marin's call earlier this week to seek accession to the NATO, officially abandoning Finland's long-held stance of neutrality toward Russia.</p> <p>Finnish President Sauli Niinisto said Saturday he held a "straightforward" phone conversation with Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin informing him of his country's decision.</p>

	<p>The Finnish leader said he told Putin how Russia's actions in Ukraine have "changed Finland's security environment" and confirmed his country's intentions to apply for NATO membership in the coming days.</p> <p>"The discussion was straightforward and unambiguous and was held without exaggeration," Niinisto said.</p> <p>The official Kremlin news service said Putin warned Niinisto during the "frank" conversation that Finland's move "abandoning the traditional policy of military neutrality would be a mistake, since there are no threats to Finland 's security."</p> <p>"Such a change in the country's foreign policy may have a negative impact on Russian-Finnish relations, which for many years have been built in the spirit of good neighborliness and partnership cooperation, and have been mutually beneficial," it said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/14 Used-car buyers are seeing relief on prices</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/used-car-buyers-are-seeing-relief-on-once-soaring-prices-11652529601?mod=hp_lead_pos7">https://www.wsj.com/articles/used-car-buyers-are-seeing-relief-on-once-soaring-prices-11652529601?mod=hp_lead_pos7</a>
GIST	<p>Rising used-car prices, which have been a big contributor to inflation over the past year, are starting to ease with dealers saying buyers are pushing back on what they are willing to spend.</p> <p>During the pandemic, prices for preowned vehicles climbed 45%, hitting an average of \$29,969 at the end of last year and rising faster than those for brand-new vehicles, according to data from research-firm Edmunds.</p> <p>The climb has been driven in large part by a shortage of new vehicles, which have also surged in price and left buyers scrambling to find more affordable options. That has <a href="#">pushed many Americans to the used-car lot</a>.</p> <p>Used-car prices softened in the months heading into spring—usually a prime buying season in the auto industry with people getting tax refund checks. In April, the average price of a used car was \$29,948, about \$21 less than what it was in December, according to data provided by Edmunds.</p> <p>“Affordability is certainly an issue,” said Jeff Williams, chief executive of <a href="#">America’s Car-Mart</a> Inc. a chain of used-car retailers in the Midwest and South. “What we’re hearing from customers, and potential customers, is that prices are too high.”</p> <p>The moderation comes as prices on new vehicles continued to climb last month, up 1.1% from March this year and 13.2% higher than in April 2021, according to the Labor Department’s consumer-price index. By comparison, government data showed prices for used cars and trucks fell by 0.4% in April.</p> <p>Buyers are also paying more for other goods, such as groceries and air travel. Overall, <a href="#">inflation edged down to an 8.3%</a> annual rate in April but remained close to the fastest pace in four decades, the Labor Department reported.</p> <p>Across industries, companies have been charging more to offset rising costs. And while initially the price increases were met with little resistance, consumers <a href="#">are now holding off on making purchases in some areas</a>.</p> <p>Used-car prices were creeping up even before the Covid-19 health crisis. But the factory shutdowns in the early days of the pandemic, coupled with a parts shortage that hit later in the year, have left dealership lots stripped of inventory, pushing prices on both used and new vehicles to record highs.</p> <p>Preowned-car buyers tend to be more <a href="#">price conscious</a>, making the higher costs more difficult to swing, say dealers and executives. Consumers already are stretching out the loan periods to make monthly payments more affordable and moving down to older and older vehicles with lower price tags, they say.</p>

Phil Maguire, owner of Maguire Family Dealerships based in Ithaca, N.Y., said he expects demand for used cars to remain elevated for the remainder of the year. But the high price tags are putting some customers in tough situations, and because of this, he said he is seeing used-vehicle sales soften in certain categories, such as larger SUVs and trucks.

“It’s just created this situation where we’re starting to see certain segments reach a peak,” Mr. Maguire said.

The average used-car loan in April carried a \$544 monthly payment, up a full \$100 from the same month a year ago and close to what a buyer would have spent on monthly payments for a brand-new vehicle at the start of the pandemic, according to Edmunds.

That payment equates to about 22% of the median personal income for an individual in April, up from about 18% five years ago, based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau and Edmunds.

As a result, more buyers are simply choosing to wait out the high prices by delaying purchase until costs come down, auto retailers say.

“Used vehicles are going to become less and less a story in this inflation environment,” said Jonathan Smoke, chief economist for Cox Automotive.

Retail sales for preowned cars dropped roughly 21% in April [compared with the same year-ago period](#), according to data from industry research firm Cox Automotive. Contributing to the decline is a lack of used options, particularly at low price points that appeal to those on a tight budget, analysts and car retailers say.

Still, the dynamics of the car market remain fluid, and it is unclear how long this leveling off will last, given auto makers have experienced a series of unexpected supply shocks already that have prolonged the inventory crunch. And even with the moderation, used-car prices are still cruising at historic highs, and industry executives don’t see them coming down anytime soon.

For now, some car shoppers are finding a better deal buying new rather than used.

Joyce McClintock-Oberg, who visited a Subaru dealership in Michigan last month, said she was looking to buy a certified preowned SUV for her daughter. But the gap between that and a new one was only about \$1,000, so she opted to purchase a new model instead.

“It just all seems pretty absurd to me,” Ms. McClintock-Oberg said. “If I could have saved significant money, I would’ve done that,” she said, of buying a used car.

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HEADLINE	05/14 Rising food prices roil developing world
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/rising-food-prices-roil-developing-world-11652520782?mod=hp_lead_pos3">https://www.wsj.com/articles/rising-food-prices-roil-developing-world-11652520782?mod=hp_lead_pos3</a>
GIST	<p>Soaring food prices are triggering shortages and protests across the developing world as disruption from the Ukraine war adds to <a href="#">existing strains on global supplies of grains</a>, meat and other foodstuffs.</p> <p>India on Saturday invoked a <a href="#">rare ban on wheat exports</a> to help tame domestic prices, a move likely to exacerbate global strains. The country is the world’s second-largest wheat grower, behind China. Late last month, Indonesia halted the <a href="#">export of certain types of palm oil</a> in an effort to lower soaring prices of cooking oil at home.</p> <p>Rising prices helped stoke the violent unrest that led to the <a href="#">resignation of Sri Lanka’s prime minister</a> earlier this week and have fanned more peaceful protests in the Middle East. In parts of Africa, millers have run out of</p>

wheat. Consumers are skimping on food items once considered everyday staples and substituting cheaper products.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has "generated one of the most severe food and energy crises in recent history which now threatens those most vulnerable across the globe," the Group of Seven club of rich nations said Saturday in a statement after a meeting in northern Germany.

On Thursday, the head of the United Nations World Food Program said the globe faces outright food shortages as early as next year if Ukrainian seaports remain blocked by Russia.

Food prices had been heading higher since last year, hit by supply-chain disruptions related to the Covid-19 pandemic and poor harvests in the U.S., Canada and other countries. Then, Russia's invasion of Ukraine choked off [a significant slice of sunflower oil](#), wheat and corn exports, while disrupting the flow of fertilizers needed to increase crop yields. Ukraine is responsible for 10% of global wheat exports, 14% of corn exports and roughly half of the world's sunflower oil, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Russia's massive grain exports also risk being affected by sanctions and insecurity in the Black Sea. Moscow has stopped exporting fertilizer.

The executive director of the World Food Program, David Beasley, told a conference in New York that Ukrainian ports must reopen before the harvesting season, which begins in earnest in mid-June, to prevent shortages next year. Some 300 million people could face "crisis levels of acute food insecurity in the coming months," he said earlier in written U.S. Senate testimony.

Even in the world's richest nations, higher food prices are causing strain. Norwegian food-bank charity Matsentralen Norge says it has distributed 28% more food compared with the same period in 2021, a year that in itself saw sharply higher demand. [U.S. grocery prices in April were up 10.8%](#) over the past 12 months, the largest annual increase since November 1980, according to the Labor Department.

U.K. supermarkets have rationed sunflower oil. John Allan, chairman of British grocery giant [Tesco](#) PLC, told the British Broadcasting Corp. this week that the country is seeing "real food poverty" for the first time in a generation.

But it is in [the world's poorest countries](#) where the effects of the Ukraine conflict on food prices are being felt most sharply.

A drought is ravishing northern Kenya. But local farmers asked Craig Redmond, a senior official at Mercy Corps, a nonprofit that helps distribute aid, about the war in Ukraine during a recent visit there.

"I have never seen a situation where people see so very clearly geopolitics' impact" on food supplies, he said.

The war is happening at a time when other big producers are suffering their own challenges. A searing heat wave and lack of rainfall in India has forced it to downgrade its wheat production estimate by almost 6%, after five years of bumper harvests.

India is a crucial supplier of wheat to its neighbors. Afghanistan recently received large consignments of wheat from India on humanitarian grounds. Bangladesh is another big importer of Indian wheat. Prices, meanwhile, have soared inside the country, helping trigger Saturday's export restrictions. "The food security of India, neighboring and other vulnerable countries is at risk," said India's Directorate General of Foreign Trade in a notice explaining the ban.

Poor weather has delayed spring planting in key parts of the U.S. Farm Belt, threatening to cut into crop yields if farmers don't make quick progress.

The USDA in a forecast on Thursday said it expects world wheat stockpiles in the 2022-23 season to fall 5% to 267 million tons from the season before, marking a six-year low.

Futures prices for wheat traded on the Chicago Board of Trade have climbed more than 50% since the start of the year, while prices for corn are up more than 30% and soybeans have risen more than 20%. In April, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization's food index was up 30% from the same month last year and 60% since 2019, before the global pandemic hit farm production and supply chains.

That is hurting people like Veeramuththu Mangaleswary, a 49-year-old single mother living in the outskirts of Colombo, Sri Lanka's capital. Ms. Mangaleswary said she now struggles to afford a tea bun, a sweet bread roll popular in the country, for her teenage daughter's breakfast.

"We're on our last legs," she said.

Sri Lanka relies on Ukraine and Russia for 45% of its wheat. Food price rises have heaped further pressure on an economy laid low by the loss of tourism revenue through the pandemic, high levels of foreign debt and lower tax revenue. As with many other developing economies, a fall in the value of the local currency is also crimping buying power on global food markets.

Mahinda Rajapaksa, the country's prime minister, resigned on Monday following violent clashes between his supporters and opponents in Colombo.

Iran, meanwhile, has faced protests in recent days after sudden price increases on staples such as sugar and cooking oil. The government has said it would eliminate subsidies on wheat and flour for bakeries to curb smuggling of cheap food items out of the country and enhance food security. Agriculture Minister Seyyed Javad Sadatinejad has partly blamed the Ukraine war for higher prices.

Across Africa, severe weather has disrupted local harvests. Food prices on the continent were already at a 10-year high before the invasion.

For Cameroon, one of Africa's top wheat importers, Covid-19 lockdowns and violence by Boko Haram, a Nigerian terrorist group active in several neighboring countries, have cut local production in half, according to the country's trade ministry. Meanwhile, the country has suffered a 60% slump in wheat imports since Russia invaded Ukraine. In February, the country's millers body suspended wheat deliveries to bakeries, citing steep prices.

Around half of the 26 million people in the country who consume bread daily no longer have a regular supply, according to the government. A 9-ounce loaf of bread that used to cost the equivalent of 25 U.S. cents now sells for 90 cents.

Countries are scrambling to adapt. Egypt, the world's largest importer of wheat, is turning to countries from Paraguay to India, to diversify away from Ukraine. The Democratic Republic of Congo is putting millions of dollars into a project to get bakeries in sub-Saharan Africa's largest nation to switch from wheat to flour made from cassava, a plant with starchy roots readily available across the country.

In homes around the world, people are cutting back on staples or substituting them with cheaper alternatives. In Brazil, the cost of carrots and tomatoes has more than doubled from this time last year, while roast coffee is up nearly 70%.

Maria do Socorro da Costa Alves, a 65-year-old retiree in São Paulo, said she is forgetting what meat tastes like. Not long ago, Ms. Alves was eating meat at least once a week. With food prices skyrocketing, she is only buying beef once a month.

"First came the pandemic and now the war," said Ms. Alves, as she shopped for bargains at a local supermarket. "Sometimes we can't afford the basics, and I fear things may get even worse."



HEADLINE	05/14 Russian diamonds, gold still enter US?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/why-its-so-hard-to-keep-russian-diamonds-and-gold-out-of-the-u-s-despite-sanctions-11652526180?mod=hp_lead_pos2">https://www.wsj.com/articles/why-its-so-hard-to-keep-russian-diamonds-and-gold-out-of-the-u-s-despite-sanctions-11652526180?mod=hp_lead_pos2</a>
GIST	<p>Russian gold and diamonds could still be sold in the U.S. despite being sanctioned, lawmakers and industry participants say, unless companies and governments tighten their controls.</p> <p>In theory, U.S. and European sanctions have outlawed the sale of gold and diamonds from Russia. In practice, Russian gems and precious metals are likely still entering Western markets, these people say, often via a hard-to-police global web of middlemen.</p> <p>Tougher controls are needed to “make sure Russia can’t use its gold reserves to fund the atrocities being carried out across Ukraine,” Rep. Elissa Slotkin (D., Mich.) said in a statement setting out her support for proposed legislation further restricting Russian gold imports.</p> <p>That is in large part because processed diamonds and finished jewelry are often imported from countries such as China, India and Turkey, meaning they could be brought into the U.S. legitimately even if the raw materials originally came from Russia, jewelers say.</p> <p>Russia accounts for around a tenth of the global gold supply and 30% of the diamond supply, and it has a gold stockpile worth roughly \$140 billion, according to the World Gold Council. The value of its diamond hoard isn’t known but is estimated to be of a similar magnitude, jewelry industry analysts say.</p> <p>The true origin of gold and diamonds is often hard to discern: Russian gold might be used in jewelry produced in Turkey, for example, or Russian diamonds polished in India and then re-exported. Yet that problem could be addressed if U.S. jewelers and consumers demand full traceability, say people in the industry.</p> <p>“Gold and diamonds are both very exploitable,” said Susan Wheeler, a Chicago-based jewelry designer and ethical-sourcing advocate. “Consumers need to know they could be funding the war in Ukraine,” she added, if they buy from stores that don’t validate their supply chain.</p> <p>The U.S. targeted polished Russian diamonds as part of a wave of sanctions in the weeks following the February invasion of Ukraine. It then in April specifically sanctioned Alrosa, the giant Russian diamond producer responsible for 90% of the country’s total supply, amid calls from lawmakers for tougher measures. Alrosa didn’t respond to questions.</p> <p>Besides calling for sanctions on Alrosa, a bipartisan group of congressional representatives wrote to the Biden administration in April warning of loopholes in the way jewelry flows are controlled, notably the ease of importing Russian diamonds via third countries. They urged the Treasury Department to change how it defines the country of origin, and to work with countries such as India to stop them from being used as conduits for sanctioned Russian assets.</p> <p>A “Stop Russian Gold Act,” introduced to Congress in March, which would prohibit U.S. citizens from dealing with foreign nationals who purchase or transact in Russian gold, has yet to be passed. Later that month the Treasury Department said Russian gold may already be subject to broad sanctions imposed through an executive order signed by President Biden in April 2021 designed to punish Russia for attempting to interfere in U.S. elections.</p> <p>The Treasury Department didn’t respond to requests for comment.</p> <p>The European Union has also sanctioned Russian gold and jewelry.</p> <p>In a global industry mainly comprising small businesses and a vast network of middlemen, “There’s so much opacity in the middle of the supply chain,” said Christina Miller, a sustainable-jewelry consultant and part of the Global Gold Transparency Initiative.</p>



The GGTI is urging policy makers to beef up sanctions by closing loopholes and making it illegal to handle Russian material even if it was sourced through third countries. “The concern is that if [politicians] don’t understand the way the jewelry industry works, they may think they’re accomplishing something they’re not,” Ms. Miller said.

In April, the Switzerland-based Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime warned that sanctioned Russian companies and individuals were likely already selling gold on the black market by moving supplies to third countries.

Big Western companies typically rely on independent organizations such as the U.K.-based Responsible Jewellery Council to certify gems and precious metals as ethical. But the Ukraine war has placed this system under strain.

In March, the council resisted pressure from members to suspend Alrosa, prompting several of the world’s leading jewelers—including Gucci owner Kering SA, Pandora A/S and Cartier owner Compagnie Financière Richemont SA—to quit the organization, citing its inaction regarding the Russian miner. The council’s chief executive officer also resigned. The former CEO didn’t respond to a request for comment.

Alrosa, which is one-third owned by the Russian state, in April suspended itself from the group. In a statement it cited the “unprecedented realities” it was facing without directly referring to sanctions or the war in Ukraine. The Council said it had been waiting for legal advice before taking any action.

Several big jewelers have independently said they are taking action on Russian gems. Tiffany & Co. owner LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton SE has said it is working to rid its supply chain of Russian diamonds, while U.S. jewelry store operator Signet Jewelers Ltd. has said it would stop purchasing Russian diamonds. Neither company responded to requests for comment.

Industry participants such as Mses. Miller and Wheeler have urged big companies to be more transparent about their sourcing to show they are cutting Russian material out of their supply chains.

Smaller U.S. jewelers are also scrambling to adjust. “It never occurred to me” that Russia was a problematic source of gold and diamonds, said Bob Goodman, a Zionsville, Ind.-based jeweler. Now he sees Russia as a source of “conflict” gold and diamonds, much like those from war zones in parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Mr. Goodman said he has sought assurances from his New York-based diamond supplier that he wouldn’t receive any more gems that originated in Russia. He only buys gold from sources that can trace the origins of their supplies, he said.

However, with fully traceable gold typically costing around 20% more, Mr. Goodman said many American jewelers are likely more concerned about their margins than the risk that they might be funding faraway conflicts. Others are too set in their ways to research new ethical sources, he added.

“I hear a lot of excuses” from jewelers reluctant to take greater care over where they source their gems and precious metals, Mr. Goodman said, “and that’s disturbing.”

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HEADLINE	05/14 Ukraine counterattacks Russia supply lines
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraine-launches-counteroffensive-to-disrupt-russian-supply-lines-11652531731?mod=hp_lead_pos1">https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraine-launches-counteroffensive-to-disrupt-russian-supply-lines-11652531731?mod=hp_lead_pos1</a>
GIST	KYIV, Ukraine—Ukraine began a counteroffensive toward the eastern city of Izyum aimed at disrupting <a href="#">Russian supply lines</a> into the Donbas region, officials said, as Ukrainian forces continued clearing villages north of Kharkiv and President <a href="#">Vladimir Putin</a> warned his Finnish counterpart that joining NATO would risk damaging relations with Moscow.

According to the Kremlin, Mr. Putin told Finland's President Sauli Niinistö in a phone call Saturday that ending its decadeslong nonaligned defense policy by joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization would be a mistake for Helsinki. The Finnish leader initiated the call to explain to Mr. Putin how his invasion of Ukraine had altered the security environment, prompting Finland to [seek NATO membership](#) in the coming days.

"The conversation was direct and straightforward and was conducted without aggravations. Avoiding tension was considered important," Mr. Niinistö said.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko, meanwhile, said that Moscow would need to take "adequate precautionary measures" if NATO were to deploy infrastructure for nuclear weapons near Russia's borders, including in Finland.

As the war entered its 80th day, [Russian offensive operations](#) in Donbas remained largely stalled following the failure of Russia's ambitious attempt to cross the Siverskyi Donets river and encircle the metropolitan area of Severodonetsk, the capital of the Ukrainian-administered Luhansk region.

With Western weapons [continuing to flow into Ukraine](#), Ukrainian officials are beginning to say that a pivot in the war might be near, with Kyiv switching from defense to offense to reclaim large parts of southern and eastern Ukraine that remain under Russian rule.

"A strategic break in Ukraine's favor is under way. This process will take time. But, in the long term, these trends make Russia's defeat inevitable," Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov said in an address to Ukrainian citizens.

After Russia's initial plans to seize the capital, Kyiv, [failed amid Ukrainian resistance](#), Mr. Putin in late March ordered his forces to pull back from northern Ukraine and concentrate on seizing the entirety of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions that make up Donbas. Mr. Putin in February recognized the independence of the Moscow-created proxy states in Donbas, the Donetsk and Luhansk people's republics, which controlled roughly one-third of these two regions at the time.

Russia has established the forward headquarters of its operations to conquer Donbas in the town of Izyum, which straddles the Siverskyi Donets river in the Kharkiv region. Ukrainian troops have begun to push successfully toward the town, the head of the Kharkiv regional military administration, Oleh Synehubov, said Saturday.

"The Izyum direction remains our hottest point. That's where our armed forces have begun a counteroffensive," he said in a video address. "The enemy is retreating in some directions, which is the result of the character of our armed forces."

With Russia's monthlong offensive in Donbas showing only limited results, a bold attempt to cross the Siverskyi Donets and encircle Severodonetsk that Russian forces began ahead of [Victory Day on May 9](#) was meant to achieve a breakthrough. Instead, the failed crossing near the village of Bilohorivka has turned into a disaster for Russia, significantly slowing its momentum in Donbas.

The full scale of this Russian setback is emerging only now, with satellite imagery showing more than 70 Russian tanks, armored personnel carriers and other armor destroyed after Ukrainian artillery and airstrikes sank three pontoon bridges and shelled the Russian beachhead in Bilohorivka.

"We have never seen such dumb stubbornness, going with a frontal assault and trying to build pontoons in the same place three times in a row. But they still keep trying," said Luhansk Gov. Serhiy Haidai. He added that Ukrainian artillery keeps shelling the area and, according to intelligence intercepts, an entire Russian battalion is refusing orders to attempt yet another crossing in Bilohorivka. That claim couldn't be independently confirmed.

While Moscow hasn't acknowledged the events in Bilohorivka, accounts from Russian military officers and observers on Telegram have described it as one of the Russian military's most catastrophic defeats in this war, calling for the dismissal and punishment of generals who devised the failed operation.

Reverse Side of the Medal, a channel close to the [Wagner private military contractor](#) that is actively involved in the war in Ukraine, pointed out sardonically that the Russian commanders in the Bilohorivka operation were "guided by the principle that the shell doesn't fall into the same place twice and that if you don't see the enemy, he cannot see you."

Ukrainian artillery managed to destroy at least a battalion's worth of Russian armor because it is employing drones and sophisticated reconnaissance technology to achieve precision, Wagner's channel added. "The Armed Forces of Ukraine use the Western system of smart battle management, and we use a ruler on a paper map," it said.

In Kyiv, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R., Ky.) and GOP Sens. Susan Collins of Maine, John Cornyn of Texas and John Barrasso of Wyoming met Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Saturday, according to Mr. Zelensky and a U.S. official. The meeting comes after House Speaker [Nancy Pelosi](#) (D., Calif.) and a delegation of Democratic lawmakers went to the capital city to meet with Mr. Zelensky earlier this month.

In a statement with accompanying video, Mr. Zelensky said the visit was a powerful signal of bipartisan support for Ukraine from Congress and the American people. A \$40 billion aid package for Ukraine [is stalled in the Senate](#) over objections from GOP Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky. Mr. McConnell and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D., N.Y.) had pushed for the bill's passage together Thursday to request unanimous agreement from all 100 senators to allow a vote on the bill immediately.

A U.S. official confirmed the visit and said it wasn't publicized in advance because of security concerns. Representatives for the senators didn't immediately respond to requests for comment.

North of Donbas, a string of Ukrainian military victories in recent days pushed Russian forces outside of field artillery range of the city of Kharkiv, where more than 2,000 residential apartment buildings have been destroyed in more than two months of pounding. In a sign of relative normalcy returning to Kharkiv, the municipality said public-transport services would resume Monday. It will initially be free of charge given that so many city residents have lost their jobs because of the war, said Mayor Ihor Terekhov.

Ukraine's military has confirmed that its forces have reached the town of Ternova, on the border with Russia north of Kharkiv. "The enemy didn't conduct active combat actions in the Kharkiv direction," Ukraine's General Staff said Saturday. "Its main effort was focused on pulling back troops from the city of Kharkiv, maintaining positions and protecting supply lines."

The retreat of Russian forces from areas north of Kharkiv is covered by poorly armed recruits drafted in the Luhansk People's Republic. In a video released on Telegram on Friday, these fighters said that their battalion, which fled to the Russian border north of Kharkiv, was stranded at the gate, with Russian authorities refusing to let them cross and threatening to imprison them if they don't turn around and fight.

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HEADLINE	05/14 Sri Lanka president clings on to power
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/14/sri-lankan-president-gota-clings-on-to-power-gotabaya-rajapaksa">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/14/sri-lankan-president-gota-clings-on-to-power-gotabaya-rajapaksa</a>
GIST	They have called it "Gota Go Village". Here, on what was once an empty stretch of lawn outside the office of the Sri Lankan prime minister, on Colombo's seafront Galle Face promenade, a thriving community has sprung up. There are tents, food stalls, a library, a memorial, art installations, stages for music and speeches, and even the beginnings of a small farm growing vegetables and fruit from recently planted trees. Nearby, a patch has been set aside to cultivate rice.

It began as the focal point of the anti-government protests that have engulfed Sri Lanka for months as the country goes through the worst economic crisis since independence. As fuel, food and medicine have run short, the blame has been placed firmly at the feet of one man, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, widely known as Gota, who stands accused of economic mismanagement and corruption pushing the country to the brink of bankruptcy. The calls from the majority of the population have been clear: Gota must step down.

But as it has become evident that Gotabaya Rajapaksa will not give in to public demands, the protesters, too, have made it clear they are not going anywhere. What began as a few temporary marquees grew into a full tent village occupied by hundreds.

“We will not stop the protest until Gota goes home. We are staying here and we are ready to stay permanently,” said AM Fernando, who works in the television and film industry.

But last week, the protest village also became the target of the worst violence the country has seen since the demonstrations began earlier this year. On Monday, pro-government supporters, many of whom had been bussed in from outside the city, attacked the Gota Go Village site. Armed with iron rods and sticks, they beat protesters and set tents alight. Police then fired tear gas and water cannons at the camp.

Among the injured was a Buddhist monk, Welimada Upananda Thero, who is now receiving treatment for a leg so badly bruised that he needs crutches. “They just came started beating us. They beat everything we had in our tent, even my sandals,” he said

The incident triggered violence elsewhere. Mahinda Rajapaksa, the brother of the president, who resigned as prime minister on Monday after mounting public pressure, had to be evacuated at dawn on Tuesday from his official residence in Colombo after protesters tried to storm the building. Houses belonging to the Rajapaksas and their supporters were attacked and set alight across the country, and the military was brought on to Colombo’s streets with orders to shoot looters.

Yet despite a curfew and the imposition of a state of emergency, protesters at Gota Go Village turned out in their droves, rebuilding structures pulled down by the pro-government attacks.

Gotabaya Rajapaksa’s appointment on Thursday of a new prime minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe, who has served as PM five times before, did little to appease the anger of many at the camp, and a spinoff site, “Ranil Go Home”, was set up by Friday.

Wickremesinghe, who has been in politics for more than four decades, last served as PM between 2015 and 2019 in a regime that toppled the Rajapaksa family’s previous decade-long hold on power but ultimately descended into dysfunction and infighting. He suffered a humiliating defeat in the 2020 parliamentary election, with his United National Party (UNP) winning just a single seat.

While he is regarded as a safe pair of hands for the economy, Wickremesinghe is also seen by many as the quintessential insider politician who will continue the status quo. He is long accused of protecting the interests of both the Rajapaksa family and corrupt figures in his own earlier government, maintaining his political career through back-door scheming.

“The real problem for Ranil is he is being seen as prop, albeit a very weak one, for a widely discredited and now even reviled leader,” said Harim Peiris, a political analyst.

Wickremesinghe said he was taking on the role in order to guide the country through the worst of the economic crisis and put food back on to people’s plates, and said he still supported the protesters’ call for Gotabaya Rajapaksa to step down.

But Alan Keenan, International Crisis Group senior consultant on Sri Lanka, said that by accepting the position, Wickremesinghe was inevitably helping to prop up the Rajapaksa regime. “His appointment breathes new life into the desperate Rajapaksa family, and seems likely to undercut chances of achieving

the protesters' central demand – backed by 90% of the public – that Gotabaya Rajapaksa resign as president.”

Asanka Abeyrathna, a former university lecturer who has been at the protest camp since it was set up, was among those who said they were not happy with the decision to appoint Wickremesinghe as prime minister.

“In 2015, Ranil was in charge of a government that promised us justice – but this did not happen, so what is the point of having Ranil again?” said Abeyrathna. “Maybe he can bring in dollars to get us gas, electricity and fuel but this will not ensure justice for past atrocities or relief for the people. Until Gota goes there will be no change.”

Many in the protest camp called for Wickremesinghe to prove his political neutrality by taking action against the Rajapaksa family and to arrest Mahinda Rajapaksa for his role in instigating Monday's violence. “The first thing Ranil has to do is to send Gota home and also punish him for the wrongs he has done,” said Fernando.

Wickremesinghe's ability to govern as prime minister remains to be seen. He is the only lawmaker from his UNP in parliament and so will be reliant on pro-Rajapaksa MPs and a few independents to form a majority coalition. He claimed to have the numbers but his majority will be put to the test in coming days, as parliament is due to vote on a motion of no confidence in the president and he will also have to get a budget passed.

While Wickremesinghe's appointment is likely to be welcomed by foreign governments and international creditors, many are sceptical he will bring about the systemic change being demanded by those on the streets or provide long-term political stability.

“As long as there is a state of emergency, and the current president continues to function, the country's economic recovery will be devastatingly slow,” said Gehan Gunatilleke, a human rights lawyer and former adviser to the Sri Lankan foreign ministry.

Senior opposition lawmaker and economist Harsha de Silva publicly rejected an offer to take over the finance ministry in Wickremesinghe's cabinet. “People are not asking for political games and deals – they want a new system that will safeguard their future,” he said.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/14 NKorea: Covid outbreak 'great disaster'</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/14/north-korea-kim-jong-un-declares-covid-outbreak-a-great-disaster">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/14/north-korea-kim-jong-un-declares-covid-outbreak-a-great-disaster</a>
GIST	<p>North Korea's leader, Kim Jong-un, has declared the country's first Covid-19 outbreak a “great disaster” as it reported 21 more deaths.</p> <p>State media said 174,440 people were newly found with fever symptoms on Friday alone as the country scrambles to slow the spread of Covid-19 across its unvaccinated population.</p> <p>North Korea said on Saturday that a total of 27 people have died and 524,440 fell ill amid a rapid spread of fever since late April. It said 280,810 people remain in quarantine.</p> <p>State media did not specifically say how many of the fever cases and deaths were confirmed as Covid-19 cases.</p> <p>During a meeting on anti-virus strategies on Saturday, Kim described the outbreak as a historically “huge disruption” and called for unity between the government and people to stabilise the outbreak as quickly as possible.</p>

The meeting discussed “promptly distributing emergency drugs” and introducing “scientific treatment tactics and treatment methods for different patients, including those with special constitutions”, KCNA reported.

Kim said he had “faith that we can overcome this malicious infectious disease within the shortest period possible,” the report added.

The country imposed nationwide lockdowns on Thursday after confirming its first Covid-19 infections since the start of the pandemic.

Kim said they would be following the Chinese model of virus prevention.

“We should take lessons from the experiences and fruitful achievements in preventing virus of the China’s Communist party and its people,” he said.

State media said tests of virus samples collected Sunday from an unspecified number of people with fevers in the country’s capital, Pyongyang, confirmed they were infected with the Omicron variant. The country has so far officially confirmed one death as linked to an Omicron infection.

Experts say a failure to control the spread of Covid could have devastating consequences in North Korea, considering the country’s poor healthcare system and that its 26 million people are largely unvaccinated.

North Korea has so far shunned offers of Covid vaccines from China and Russia, and via the World Health Organization’s Covax scheme, apparently because administering the jabs would require outside monitoring.

Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul, said the regime’s public acknowledgment of coronavirus cases meant “the public health situation must be serious”.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/14 Food protests continue across Iran</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/14/food-protests-continue-across-iran-as-one-person-reported-dead">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/14/food-protests-continue-across-iran-as-one-person-reported-dead</a>
GIST	<p>Protests over soaring food prices continued in several cities in Iran on Saturday, according to postings on social media, while an Iranian lawmaker told local media one person was killed in a demonstration in the south-west.</p> <p>The protests were triggered last week by a cut in state subsidies for imported wheat that caused price hikes of as much as 300% for a variety of flour-based staples. The government of President Ebrahim Raisi also raised prices of basic goods such as cooking oil and dairy products.</p> <p>The northern city of Rasht, the central town of Farsan and the north-eastern city of Neyshabur were among areas hit by protests, according to videos posted on social media.</p> <p>“Raisi, have some shame, let go of the country!” chanted protesters on one such video. Reuters could not independently authenticate the videos.</p> <p>Local lawmaker Ahmad Avai told the semi-official ILNA news agency one person had been killed during rallies in Dezful, a city in the oil-producing southwestern province of Khuzestan.</p> <p>State media earlier said an estimated 300 people were dispersed by security forces in Dezful and 15 were arrested late on Thursday.</p> <p>In the first signs of discontent over price rises, Iranian media last week reported disrupted internet services, an apparent attempt to stop the use of social media to organise rallies and disseminate videos.</p>



	<p>Internet blockage observatory NetBlocks on Saturday reported a disruption lasting hours on Iran's MobinNet. "The disruption is the latest in a series of telecoms cuts amid protests," NetBlocks said on Twitter.</p> <p>Wheat prices have sharply risen globally since the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February, adding to the cost of subsidies in Iran.</p> <p>Iranian officials have also blamed the price hikes on the smuggling of heavily subsidised flour into neighbouring Iraq and Afghanistan.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/13 Extreme conditions fuel intense fire season</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/13/us-wildfires-california-new-mexico-burning-early-2022">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/13/us-wildfires-california-new-mexico-burning-early-2022</a>
GIST	<p>Extreme conditions have <a href="#">fueled an explosive start</a> to what's expected to be yet another intense season of big blazes, with months to go before wildfire threats typically peak across the west.</p> <p>Wildfires have charred close to 1.3m acres nationwide this year, according to the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC), outpacing the 10-year average for this time of year by more than 71%. Predictions for the rest of the spring do not bode well for the west, with the drought and warmer weather brought on by the climate crisis worsening wildfire danger.</p> <p>"We all know it's really early for our fire season and we're all in awe of what we've already experienced," said Dave Bales, commander on a <a href="#">New Mexico</a> fire that is the largest burning in the US.</p> <p>From a <a href="#">California</a> hilltop where mansions with multimillion-dollar Pacific Ocean views were torched to remote New Mexico mountains burned by a month-old monster blaze, similar conditions set the stage for the fires, which fire crews are still fighting to contain. Exacerbated by the climate crisis, rising temperatures spurred dryness, turning parched vegetation into fuel. Gusty winds have complicated firefights, carrying embers and fanning the flames through the drought-stricken region.</p> <p>As the <a href="#">unstoppable northern New Mexico wildfire</a> chewed through more dense forest on Thursday, firefighters in the coastal community of Laguna Niguel doused charred and smoldering remains of 20 large homes that quickly went up in flames and forced a frantic evacuation.</p> <p>"The sky, everything was orange. It looked like an inferno, so we just jumped in the car," Sassan Darian said, as he recounted fleeing with his daughter and father while embers swirled around them. "My daughter said, 'We're on fire.' There were sparks on her and we were patting ourselves down."</p> <p>Fire officials said there was not much they could do in recent days to stop the fast-moving flames burning in tinder-dry forests in the Sangre de Cristo range. Fueled by overgrown mountainsides covered with ponderosa pine and other trees sucked dry of moisture over decades, the fire had burned across more than 270,440 acres – an area bigger than the city of Dallas, Texas – by Friday morning and was 30% contained.</p> <p>Crews fighting flames along the mountain fronts between Santa Fe and Taos mostly held their own on Thursday thanks to welcome help from aerial attacks. But fire operations chief Todd Abel said that in some places where winds were gusting over ridgetops, it was "almost like putting a hair dryer on it".</p> <p>Even small fires that once would have been easily contained are extreme threats to life and property because of climate breakdown, said Brian Fennessy, chief of the Orange county fire authority.</p> <p>The fire that broke out in southern California on Wednesday afternoon, which may have been sparked by electric utility equipment, was pushed up a canyon by strong sea breezes and quickly ignited large homes. It burned a relatively small area, about 200 acres (81 hectares), and was at 15% containment on Friday but had left a path of destruction.</p>



The weather wasn't unusual that day in Orange county, with mild temperatures, offshore breezes and high humidity. But the ignition on a steep slope covered in dried vegetation enabled the disaster to develop quickly.

"What we're seeing that we haven't seen in years past is these fires are starting and the vegetation is so dry that with any wind behind it — even a normal wind for that area — it's going to spread faster than we're used to and faster than we can get our units at the scene," Fennessy [told the Los Angeles Times](#).

Many of the homes claimed by the flames were [built before fire-protective building codes](#), making them more vulnerable to embers.

A sprawling estate selling for \$9.9m had looked in real estate listings like a California dream: teeming with luxuries that included a two-level library, a "wellness wing" with sauna and steam room and a pool on a terrace overlooking scenic Laguna Beach. By nightfall, the mansion once photographed against a pastel sunset had morphed into a nightmare: its arched facade silhouetted against a glowing yellow sky as firefighters trained their hoses on the engulfed structure.

After the big flames died down on Thursday, the house was one of many smoking casualties marked off with yellow tape. In another driveway, a burned-out car rested on its rims. The steep surrounding hillsides were blackened and stripped of vegetation.

Many other homes appeared unscathed and palm trees that had survived the onslaught of embers swayed above in calmer winds. Two firefighters were hospitalized but no other injuries were reported.

The fire's cause is under investigation and damage inspections were still ongoing on Thursday, TJ McGovern, assistant chief of Orange county fire authority, said.

Southern California Edison reported that unspecified electrical "circuit activity" occurred around the time the fire broke out late Wednesday afternoon.

Electric utility equipment has repeatedly been linked to starting some of the most disastrous California wildfires, especially during windy weather.

The state Public Utilities Commission last year approved a settlement of more than half a billion dollars in fines and penalties for SoCal Edison for its role in five wildfires in 2017 and 2018.

In New Mexico, another red-flag warning was expected to end by Friday night for the first time in a week but extremely low humidity and bone-dry fuels will continue to provide ample opportunity for flames to spread, officials said.

"This fire is going to continue to grow," Bales, the incident commander, warned on Thursday night.

The blaze has burned more than 170 homes so far, but authorities have said that number is expected to increase significantly as more assessments are done and residents are allowed to return home to areas deemed safe.

The coming months are not likely to offer a reprieve from conditions that favor fires, and several western states are bracing for the hot, dry summer and autumn months. The south-west is forecast to have above normal significant fire potential through June, when fires have historically been the worst for the region. Oregon and the Pacific north-west will start to see the risks rise in July, and California, particularly in the northern part of the state, will face increased threats throughout the summer, according to the NIFC's latest outlook report.

"Build-up of fuels such as dead trees and brush combines with drought to create a tinderbox ready to burn," the NIFC wrote in an official update on Friday.

HEADLINE	<b>05/14 India bans all wheat exports</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/14/india-bans-all-wheat-exports-food-security-risk">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/14/india-bans-all-wheat-exports-food-security-risk</a>
GIST	<p>India, the world's second largest producer of wheat, has banned all exports with immediate effect after a heatwave affected the crop.</p> <p>A notice in the government gazette by the directorate of foreign trade, dated Friday, said a rise in global prices for wheat was threatening the food security of India and neighbouring and vulnerable countries.</p> <p>A key aim is to control rising domestic prices. Global wheat prices have increased by more than 40% since the beginning of the year.</p> <p>Before the war, Ukraine and Russia accounted for a third of global wheat and barley exports. Since Russia's 24 February invasion, Ukraine's ports have been blocked and civilian infrastructure and grain silos destroyed.</p> <p>At the same time, India's own wheat harvest has suffered a record-breaking heatwave that is stunting production.</p> <p>Even though it is the world's second largest producer of wheat, India consumes most of the wheat it produces. It had set a goal of exporting 10m tonnes of the grain in 2022-23, looking to capitalise on global disruption to wheat supplies from the war and find new markets for its wheat in Europe, Africa and Asia.</p> <p>Much of that would have gone to other developing countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand.</p> <p>Apart from problems with weather damaging harvests, India's vast stocks of wheat – a buffer against famine – have been strained by distribution of free grain during the pandemic to about 800 million people.</p> <p>To balance supply and demand, the government needs about 25m tonnes of wheat each year for an extensive food welfare programme that usually feeds more than 80 million people.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/14 Russia troops pullback from Kharkiv</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/14/ukraine-has-won-the-battle-of-kharkiv-analysts-say-as-kyiv-warns-of-long-phase-of-war">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/14/ukraine-has-won-the-battle-of-kharkiv-analysts-say-as-kyiv-warns-of-long-phase-of-war</a>
GIST	<p>Ukrainian forces “appear to have won the battle of Kharkiv”, according to a US defence thinktank, in what appears to be their fastest advance since Russian troops pulled away from Kyiv and the north-east over a month ago.</p> <p>In another apparent setback to Vladimir Putin's war aims, analysts said on Saturday that Russian units had not attempted to hold their lines against counterattacking Ukrainian troops around the city.</p> <p>Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city and only 31 miles (50km) from the Russian border, has been under enemy bombardment since the war began in February.</p> <p>But the US-based Institute for the Study of War said in its latest assessment of the conflict that the Russians appeared to be dropping back and aimed to replace their own troops with proxy forces or mercenaries.</p> <p>“Ukraine thus appears to have won the battle of Kharkiv,” the institute said. “Ukrainian forces prevented Russian troops from encircling, let alone seizing Kharkiv, and then expelled them from around the city, as they did to Russian forces attempting to seize Kyiv.”</p>

Russian units had “generally not attempted to hold ground against counterattacking Ukrainian forces over the past several days, with a few exceptions”.

“Reports from western officials and a video from an officer of the Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) indicate that Moscow is focused on conducting an orderly withdrawal and prioritizing getting Russians back home before allowing proxy forces to enter Russia rather than trying to hold its positions near the city.”

Ukraine now controls territory stretching to the Siverskyi Donets river, around 25 miles (40km) to the east of the city.

“We are entering a new, long phase of the war,” the Ukrainian defence minister, Oleksii Reznikov, said in a Facebook post on Friday night, predicting “extremely tough weeks” ahead during which he said Ukraine would largely be alone against an “enraged aggressor”.

However, Moscow is still bombarding villages north of Kharkiv. Some six miles north of the city, firefighters doused smouldering wreckage in Dergachi after what local officials said was an overnight Russian missile attack on the House of Culture, used to distribute aid. Volunteers inside were trying to salvage packages of baby diapers and formula.

“I can’t call it anything but a terrorist act,” the mayor, Vyacheslav Zadorenko, told Reuters. “They wanted to hit the base where we store provisions and create a humanitarian catastrophe.”

Earlier on Friday, British defence intelligence said Russia had lost “significant armoured manoeuvre elements” from a battalion tactical group – usually around 800 strong – in a failed attempt to cross a strategically important river in the Donbas, to the south-east of Kharkiv.

Serhiy Haidai, the governor of the Luhansk region, said Russian forces had been repulsed three times as they tried to cross the Siverskyi Donets River, losing armour and bridging equipment.

“We have eliminated Russian speedboats and helicopters, which they used to cover their attempts,” the governor added, while aerial photography showed destroyed pontoon bridges and armour by the riverbanks.

Ukraine’s defence ministry tweeted pictures of a smashed pontoon bridge and destroyed armoured vehicles in Bilohorivka on Wednesday, describing them as showing victims of “artillerymen of the 17th tank brigade”.

Analysts believe Russian attempts to gain territory in the Donbas are increasingly focused on Severodonetsk, the easternmost town held by Ukrainian forces – and the Russian forces were trying to cross the river in an attempt to cut off the town.

However, the Institute of War said the Russians had “made no progress” with an attempted ground offensive from Izium, and that the Kremlin might not have enough troops to complete an encirclement of Severodonetsk.

“The Russians may not have enough additional fresh combat power to offset those losses and continue the offensive on a large enough scale to complete the encirclement, although they will likely continue to try to do so,” the institute said.

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HEADLINE	05/14 Day 80 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/14/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-80-of-the-invasion">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/14/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-80-of-the-invasion</a>

- **Ukraine has “likely won the battle of Kharkiv”**, the country’s second largest city, the Institute for the Study of War has said in its latest assessment of the conflict. “Ukrainian forces prevented Russian troops from encircling, let alone seizing Kharkiv, and then expelled them from around the city, as they did to Russian forces attempting to seize Kyiv,” the US-based thinktank said.
- **Ukrainians have also [repelled multiple attempts by the Russians to cross a strategically significant river in the Donbas](#)**, inflicting heavy losses in the process, according to local officials and British intelligence. British defence intelligence said Russia had lost “significant armoured manoeuvre elements” from a battalion tactical group – a formation with about 800 personnel at full strength – from the failed effort to cross the Siversky Donets River, 12 miles (20km) west of Severodonetsk.
- **Russia will suspend electricity supplies to Finland from 1am on Saturday the supplier, RAO Nordic, said**, amid rising tensions over Helsinki’s bid to join Nato.
- That news came as **US president Joe Biden expressed his support for the right of Finland and Sweden “to decide their own future, foreign policy, and security arrangements”** in a call with his Finnish counterpart, Sauli Niinistö, and Sweden’s prime minister, Magdalena Andersson.
- **Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, said that Turkey would not welcome either Sweden or Finland joining Nato.** The comments appeared directed at the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), which Turkey regards as a terrorist organisation. Sweden has a large Kurdish diaspora.
- **Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskiy says “very difficult negotiations are underway” on the evacuation of the seriously wounded and medics from the Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol**, which Russian forces continue to bombard. “Of course, we are doing everything to evacuate everyone else, each of our defenders,” the president added.
- **A [Russian soldier has appeared in court](#) accused of murdering an unarmed man on a bicycle, at the start of the first war crime trial** in Ukraine since the invasion began. Vadim Shysimarin, a commander of the Kantemirovskaya tank division, is charged with the premeditated murder of a 62-year-old man. The case is scheduled to resume on Wednesday.
- **Georgia’s breakaway region of South Ossetia [will hold a referendum on joining Russia](#)** on 17 July, the region’s leader, Anatoly Bibilov, has announced. South Ossetia was at the centre of the Russian-Georgian war in 2008 after which the Kremlin recognised the territory – along with another separatist region, Abkhazia – as an independent state and stationed military bases there.
- Ukraine’s defence minister, Oleksii Reznikov, said **Kyiv hopes to arm a million people as the country prepares for a “new, long phase of war”**. He warned that “extremely tough weeks are ahead” and that Ukraine needed “unity, cohesion, will and patience” during this difficult period.
- **The [UK has issued sanctions](#) against a dozen members of Vladimir Putin’s family and inner circle including his long-rumoured girlfriend.** The Foreign Office argued that the Russian president officially owns only modest assets, and has sanctioned the people who help support his lavish lifestyle.
- **Britain and Norway have signed a new joint declaration on enhancing cooperation between the two countries.** Boris Johnson met his Norwegian counterpart, Jonas Gahr Støre, in London on Friday, where both leaders “underscored their full support for any sovereign choice made by Nordic partners to enhance their security”, a Downing Street statement said.
- **The US defence secretary, Lloyd Austin, spoke to his Russian counterpart, Sergei Shoigu**, for the first time since before the invasion began, the Pentagon said. Austin “urged an immediate ceasefire in Ukraine and emphasised the importance of maintaining lines of communication”, the Pentagon press secretary, John Kirby, said.
- **The EU could agree on a phased embargo on Russian oil next week**, despite concerns about supply in eastern Europe, according to diplomats and officials. A senior EU diplomat told Reuters an agreement could come as early as Monday when EU foreign ministers meet in Brussels. A third diplomat said there was a chance of an agreement later in the week.
- **The lawyer for the US professional basketball player Brittney Griner said her [pre-trial detention has been extended by one month](#).** The two-time Olympic medallist was arrested in February at Moscow’s airport, allegedly in possession of vape cartridges containing oil derived from cannabis. If found guilty, she could face a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison.

HEADLINE	05/14 Russia Black Sea blockade stokes famine
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/14/ukraine-says-russian-forces-withdrawing-kharkiv">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/14/ukraine-says-russian-forces-withdrawing-kharkiv</a>
GIST	<p>Millions of people will starve to death unless Russia allows the export of Ukrainian grain from blockaded ports, foreign ministers from the G7 have said.</p> <p>As Germany's chancellor, Olaf Scholz, warned that Vladimir Putin was intransigent during their bilateral call on Friday, the ministers from Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK and US condemned Moscow for stoking a food crisis.</p> <p>The G7 governments said the Russian president was pushing 43 million people towards famine by refusing to allow cereals to leave Ukraine via Black Sea ports.</p> <p>"Russia's unprovoked and premeditated war of aggression has exacerbated the global economic outlook with sharply rising food, fuel and energy prices," they said in a joint statement. "Combined with Russia blocking the exit routes for Ukraine's grain, the world is now facing a worsening state of food insecurity and malnutrition ... This is at a time when 43 million people were already one step away from famine."</p> <p>Canada's foreign minister, Mélanie Joly, told reporters: "We need to make sure that these cereals are sent to the world. If not, millions of people will be facing famine."</p> <p>The call came as Ukrainian officials claimed some major military successes, with the mayor of Kharkiv saying on Saturday that the Russians had withdrawn "far out" from Ukraine's second-largest city.</p> <p>The general staff of Ukraine's army echoed the comments, saying the Russians had left their positions around the north-eastern city, which is 31 miles (50km) from the Russian border.</p> <p>The remorseless shelling endured by the civilian population in the region had also paused, according to the regional governor, Oleh Sinegubov, while Ukrainian forces were launching a counteroffensive near the city of Iziium, 78 miles south of Kharkiv.</p> <p>However, Putin's forces have also captured territory in the Donbas region, including Rubizhne, a city with a prewar population of about 55,000, and the situation appeared increasingly grave for the remaining soldiers trapped in the Azovstal steelworks in the south-eastern city of Mariupol.</p> <p>Speaking on Saturday at a press conference in Kyiv, Natalia Zarytska, the wife of Bogdan Sements, who is among those trapped in the sprawling steelworks, called on China to intervene and help liberate the remaining.</p> <p>She said: "Strong leaders cannot stand aside when there is evil ... After all these negotiations, there is one person worldwide who it would be difficult for Vladimir Putin to refuse. We hope that strong and good China can make difficult decisions for the good."</p> <p>"We ask the esteemed premier of China, Xi Jinping, to express love and care for global values and eastern wisdom and to join the process of rescuing the defenders of Mariupol."</p> <p>Hanna Ivleieva, the wife of a soldier in Mariupol, said only those who had lost their arms or legs were not fighting among the Ukrainian forces left in the city.</p> <p>She said: "I am a soldier with the marines. My husband, my commanding officers, and close friends are now in Azovstal."</p> <p>"They were the first to engage in the battle in this war. We are proud of all Azovstal defenders, as they are stronger than the steel [that] used to be produced here."</p> <p>"But we do not want them to be killed there. We need our heroes alive. We ask the president of China as Putin's economic partner to undertake all the necessary procedures and rescue our guys".</p>

The Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, said on Friday that talks with Moscow on extracting a “large number” of wounded defenders and some medics from the plant in Mariupol in return for the release of Russian prisoners of war were “very complex”, adding that Kyiv was using influential intermediaries.

Ukraine’s deputy prime minister Iryna Vereshchuk told local TV on Saturday that efforts were now focused on evacuating about 60 people.

Sviatoslav Palamar, the deputy commander of the Azov regiment, which makes up most of the remaining forces at the plant, said in a YouTube video that his soldiers were holding on.

He said: “Our enemy, supported by planes and artillery, continues to attack. They continue their assault on our positions but we continue to repel them.”

The G7 countries said they would expand sanctions on Russia and that they would not accept the new borders Russia is seeking to draw.

They said: “We will never recognise borders Russia has attempted to change by military aggression, and will uphold our engagement in the support of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, including Crimea, and all states.

“We reaffirm our determination to further increase economic and political pressure on Russia, continuing to act in unity.”

They called on China not to aid Putin and “to desist from engaging in information manipulation, disinformation and other means to legitimise Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine”.

Three weeks before Putin launched his war in Ukraine, the Russian president signed a pact with his Chinese counterpart that said there would be “no limits” to the two countries’ cooperation.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/13 SPD under final phase consent decree</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/spd-accomplished-much-under-consent-decree-improvements-still-needed/YHCIE6FGRZE5LGYFJDUYUHTTZ4/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/spd-accomplished-much-under-consent-decree-improvements-still-needed/YHCIE6FGRZE5LGYFJDUYUHTTZ4/</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Over the past decade, Seattle Police Department’s monitor said it has “accomplished a great deal” under the Department of Justice’s Consent Decree.</p> <p>As Seattle communities voiced that they wanted change in policing, the department “has changed its practice and performance across several critical functions,” according to a recent assessment.</p> <p>A report from the monitor said the department and its officers have “embraced a new mission and values; worked to create a service-oriented culture; expanded knowledge and skills on crisis intervention, de-escalation, and less-lethal tactics; and committed to new policies and practices.”</p> <p>When the Consent Decree first began in 2012, the monitor said communities could not access any “reliable” SPD data or outcomes, such as the use of force.</p> <p>“Officers had inferior training and supervision on how to de-escalate volatile interactions and resolve incidents with people experiencing a mental health crisis,” the report stated.</p> <p>Since that time, new policies and practices have been implemented, focusing on the “sanctity of life.”</p> <p>Use-of-force incidents are reviewed as a routine practice, and because of that, there has been a 48% drop in officers’ use of force, according to the report.</p>



“When officers stop or detain a person, they must now articulate the reason for a stop and provide justification for searches.”

As the city and the police department enter the final phase of the Consent Decree, there is still more work to be done.

The department will need to restore the trust that was lost in the wake of George Floyd’s murder in Minneapolis and the officers’ response amid subsequent protests in Seattle.

According to the report, SPD will have to repair some wounds, including changing how it manages crowds through policy and practice.

Another important issue officers will have to tackle is the disparity in policing towards minorities.

According to the report, Black and Native Americans in Seattle are disproportionately stopped or subjected to force by officers.

“SPD must catalyze the city of Seattle to identify systematically the types of activity that lead to disproportionate impacts and explore potential alternative responses that might reduce or eliminate such disparities,” the report stated.

The department must address a staffing shortage.

While the department had already come into full compliance with the Consent Decree in January 2018, monitoring continued and on May 7, 2020, the city and the Department of Justice filed a motion to terminate most substantive provisions, except specific provisions that were deemed non-compliant by the city.

It was Seattle officers’ “significant use of force” and historic levels of misconduct complaints and community outcry that led to the city withdrawing the motion “to terminate most of the Consent Decree” on June 3.

During the protests, the department failed to meet its use-of-force requirements and struggled to meet its force review obligations, which caused an impact.

The department recognized change was needed and improvements were made during the ongoing protests, but the change was too slow.

Since then, additional reviews, policy changes and compliance measures have been undertaken in 2021 and 2022, leading to the department sustaining changes that were “full and effective.”

However, further work is needed in the areas of policy and training around the use of force, force reporting and review in crowd events.

As for what’s next, the city and SPD will have to seek full compliance with the consent decree, with actions set forth in the 2022 monitoring plan. To read more about the specifics, [go here](#).

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HEADLINE	05/13 SPD recruits new training before academy
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/seattle-police-roll-out-new-training-before-recruits-go-academy/HDPO4NPYPZAXJPJZUEBCMS54BQ/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/seattle-police-roll-out-new-training-before-recruits-go-academy/HDPO4NPYPZAXJPJZUEBCMS54BQ/</a>
GIST	Nearly two years after protests over George Floyd’s death and police brutality filled Seattle streets, the Seattle Police Department is rolling out a major change: a new training program called Before the Badge.



It's a move Victoria Beach, who's led the African American Community Advisory Council to SPD since 2018, is optimistic about. When she was younger, she said, she had terrible experiences with police.

"I hated them," she said. "They need to know our history and why we feel the way we do. But I've changed. I didn't want to carry that with me... I took the role to help bridge the gap between the black community and SPD."

The new training for recruits will be about six weeks ahead of them going to the state's Criminal Justice Training Center in Burien. Before they learn about criminal law and handling a firearm, the goal is to teach them about relationships, brain science and how to handle themselves.

"When you talk about tactics and law, that's like two legs that you're kind of teetering through your career on," Seattle Police Officer Kim Bogucki said. "If you add wellness and you add community relations, now you have a real stable, you have four legs to go through your career on."

Bogucki has been with the Seattle Police Department for more than 33 years. She co-founded the If Project, bringing law enforcement together with formerly and currently incarcerated adults. Now, she'll be bringing recruits together with them and others to learn.

"So the way that you interact with the LGBTQIA community, even understanding what that is," she said. "The East-African community, the different factions within that community as a female, maybe I don't want to put my hands on a Muslim person if I have a male officer right here because it's a sign of disrespect. So how do we teach some of these little cultural nuances that maybe none of us grew up around?"

Bogucki was partners with interim police chief Adrian Diaz back in the early 2000s. She said for recruits to have a long career, mental health is critical — outside of the job and between calls.

"Can you do breathing? Meditation? Praying? Whatever it is that's the healthy thing for you, how do you reset?" she said.

David Lewis, who currently works to create healthy learning environments for Seattle Public Schools, said that re-set allows officers to adjust their tone and body language and ask people questions.

"Having that person slow down, process, and think, what question you're asking and answering," he said, "they're answering from executive functioning, which is your prefrontal cortex, which is the thinking part of their brain. While they're processing and using that part of the brain, you're actually de-escalating that person."

Recruits already run through scenarios with criminal law in mind at the academy. Lewis, who has a doctoral degree in clinical psychology, plans to use scenarios as well, with brain science at the forefront.

"Looking at hey, what went right in a given video? And why is that? And then being able to explain potentially the science of what's happening with the people that are involved in the videos," he said.

City leaders seem to be behind the training — even those sharply critical of SPD in the past, like Councilmember Lisa Herbold, who's chair of the Seattle City Council's Public Safety & Human Services committee.

"You were one of several councilmembers who voiced support for significant defunding of the Seattle Police Department. How does spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on this fall in line with that?" KIRO 7 news reporter Linzi Sheldon asked her.

"So the funding that we reduced from the Seattle Police Department was largely from moving out functions like the 911 center," Herbold said. "Council understands that we need to continue hiring officers,

	<p>and in doing so, we need to do everything we can to make sure that they're ready to do policing work, do community safety work."</p> <p>Chief Diaz said the department needs to hire 500 officers over the next five years.</p> <p>"That's going to be over half the department that is literally going to be infused with this Before the Badge training," he said.</p> <p>"If this training works and I have an interaction with one of these officers, how is this training going to change the way that interaction goes?" Linzi Sheldon asked.</p> <p>"They're going to be more cognizant and more mindful of where you're at and the trauma that you're dealing with and be able to calm you down," Diaz said.</p> <p>Those new skills will be put to the test.</p> <p>"I'm not 100-percent pro-police," Victoria Beach said. "I'm here to also hold them accountable."</p> <p>Diaz said the city has put aside \$250,000 for the pilot program. Training starts Monday, May 23.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/13 Ripple effect of record diesel fuel prices</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/traffic/gas-prices/record-diesel-fuel-prices-hurting-washington-truckers/281-f74bf5b7-3f2d-49e8-9822-f08beec4eadf">https://www.king5.com/article/traffic/gas-prices/record-diesel-fuel-prices-hurting-washington-truckers/281-f74bf5b7-3f2d-49e8-9822-f08beec4eadf</a>
GIST	<p>WENATCHEE, Wash. — Diesel fuel powers America's economy. Just about everything we consume is delivered by diesel -- whether it's by boat, truck or train.</p> <p><a href="#">Rising diesel prices</a> are costing consumers everywhere.</p> <p>"I think it's hogwash," said Brian Snyder, who runs an asphalt company in Wenatchee.</p> <p>Since trucking companies often apply a fuel surcharge to customers when prices rise, Snyder says a delivery of asphalt sealer is now \$3,000 more per truckload than last year. That has forced him to raise his rates for customers by 20%.</p> <p>Snyder believes oil companies are gouging the transportation industry to make up for losses during the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>"Where do they gouge us? They gouge at the trucker level where they have to use diesel fuel," Snyder said. "It's not rocket science."</p> <p>According to AAA, the national average for a gallon of diesel is \$5.55. That's a 36-cent increase from last month.</p> <p>Washington's average is even higher at \$5.72 per gallon -- up 23-cents since a month ago.</p> <p>Diesel is also critical for use in agriculture.</p> <p>Higher diesel prices could force farmers to scale back plantings or fertilizing, limiting already tight food supplies and driving up food prices beyond the added cost of transportation.</p> <p>The Western States Petroleum Association (WSPA) says it comes down to a matter of supply and demand.</p>

	<p>"Some diesel supplies that would've been here are being exported to Europe because of the war," said WSPA Spokesman Kevin Slagle. "Additionally, when we look at supply chain demands, demand for diesel is extremely high coming out of the pandemic."</p> <p>Leading energy economist Phil Verleger told CNN this week that tight supplies could send the average US price of diesel to \$10 a gallon by the end of the summer.</p> <p>He warned rising diesel prices could put the brakes on the US economy.</p> <p>The national average price for regular gasoline is \$4.42 per gallon. That's up nearly 50% from last year.</p> <p>"Everybody out there is paying for it and they need to get mad," said Snyder, directing his ire at oil industry executives.</p> <p>"Demonizing our industry and the men and women who provide reliable, affordable energy is not helpful," countered Slagle. "It's not addressing the policy matters at the heart of the issue. Those are what need to be talked about."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/13 Tacoma 2-bdrm apartment rent prices rising</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/tacoma/rent-rising-in-tacoma-2-bedroom-apartments/281-9340c858-f65d-46c2-82f6-9ed6e14e68c9">https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/tacoma/rent-rising-in-tacoma-2-bedroom-apartments/281-9340c858-f65d-46c2-82f6-9ed6e14e68c9</a>
GIST	<p>TACOMA, Wash. — Census data used in the American Community Survey are showing that two-bedroom apartments are seeing a higher rate of rent increase than other units.</p> <p>Like in many parts of the country, securing affordable housing in Tacoma can be tough.</p> <p>Marilyn Peneff moved to Tacoma from Seattle, hoping to find better prospects, but says she's come up short.</p> <p>In the meantime, she and her husband are staying in an apartment, but now she is worried about another thing: rent hikes.</p> <p>"We're really lucky, but a lot of people I've heard had their rents raised," she said.</p> <p>One style, in particular, that seems to be going up faster than the others is two-bedroom apartments.</p> <p>Chris Dobler of Dobler Management says that two bedrooms are a popular choice among the properties she manages for people looking to share the costs of housing.</p> <p>"We always see a strong demand for two-bedrooms more than one-bedrooms, particularly, because when the economy is difficult or when there's a lot of uncertainty, people tend to rent two bedrooms with a roommate instead of when they're more confident, they'll rent a one-bedroom by themselves," she said.</p> <p>But Dobler also says that property taxes play a big role in rising rents.</p> <p>She pointed to one of the properties she manages, which was originally meant to be affordable for working-class families, that had its property taxes increase over 10% for three years straight.</p> <p>A hard pill to swallow for many.</p> <p>"If you couple that with three-year averages of renting property tax increase, and you have water, sewer, and trash going up 6%, right out the gate you're at a 16% increase each year, just on those expenses. How do you pass on a 16% increase to your customer?" Dobler says.</p>

	<p>Dobler encouraged renters in Tacoma to look into how property taxes are spent in their neighborhoods, and reach out to their elected officials because it's something that affects the entire community, not just homeowners.</p> <p>"They're paying for the property tax increases through their rent. They're paying for their water, sewer, and trash, utility expenses that a single-family homeowner is also paying for, they're paying for those through their rent."</p> <p>Laurie Davenport, director of Development and Outreach of Tacoma ProBono warns that if rent increases aren't addressed, the city could become too expensive for its own residents to live there.</p> <p>"It becomes more expensive to live here, so people who can't afford to live here move out, the people who can move in, and it changes us," she said. "It's very disruptive for people who're getting rent increases, then they're just like, ok, I can't afford this, I can't negotiate with my landlord, this is what it is, and I'm never going to be able to do this."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/13 Seattle: need volunteers; clear graffiti, trash</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/seattle-looking-for-volunteers-to-help-with-citywide-cleanup-to-clear-graffiti-trash">https://komonews.com/news/local/seattle-looking-for-volunteers-to-help-with-citywide-cleanup-to-clear-graffiti-trash</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Seattle is calling for volunteers to <a href="#">lend a hand on May 21</a> and help rid the city of graffiti and clear trash and litter as municipal officials look for ways to engage the public in tackling nuisance quality of life issues.</p> <p>The Day of Service effort was announced weeks ago by Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell, and a mayoral spokesperson said thousands of volunteers have signed up so far.</p> <p>One of those who plans to answer the call is Chad Zinda, who works with Metropolist, a real estate firm in SoDo.</p> <p>"We just recently got tagged even this last weekend," he said. "A bunch of businesses all along 1st Avenue."</p> <p>He plans to use the cleanup day next week to have the graffiti removed from their building and to help this city come back from the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>"We lost so many businesses and things got abandoned, or at least felt like it was abandoned and things got tagged and we just want to go back out and we have to start somewhere," Zinda said. "We're kind of building back our community because we've been gone for two years. We haven't seen a lot of people. I think this is a chance to not only just go clean up, but it's also a chance to kind of go, 'oh yeah, I forgot that I'm next to so and so'"</p> <p>"It's really easy to sit at home and complain on your computer, but it's time for everyone to pitch in a little bit and do their part," said Erin Goodman, executive director of the SoDo Business Improvement Area, adding that their cleanup effort will focus next Saturday on 1st Ave. S. and will include plant beautification and graffiti removal.</p> <p>"In Ballard, we're working in the downtown core of Northwest Market Street and Ballard Avenue. We'll be cleaning Marvin's Garden Park at 22nd and Ballard Avenue. We'll do some broad scale litter and trash pickup throughout the Ballard core," said Mike Stewart, executive director of the Ballard Alliance. "And then in one of our alleyways off of Ballard Avenue, we're going to do a community mural.</p> <p>"I think this event absolutely should come back in the future," he said. "Nutm I also am hopeful that the city is going to put time, effort and resources into doing this kind of work at the city level, all throughout the year."</p>

	<p>"We'll of course be in the retail core. We're helping out Belltown, we're helping out Freeway Park, Pioneer Square, The Waterfront, among other neighborhoods" said Jennifer Casillas, vice president of the Public Space Operations and Events for the Downtown Seattle Association.</p> <p>She said her group will work on doing gardening, tackling litter, removing graffiti, restoring murals, art installations and repairing amenities where possible, "Seattleites are ready, they're willing and they want to be a part of the city's recovery."</p> <p>"More than 3,700 people have signed up across 125 total events. Over 100 events are community led," a spokesperson for Mayor Bruce Harrell's Office said.</p> <p>While a decision has not been made to hold the event again, a spokesperson with the Mayor's office said they expect more of these events in the future.</p> <p>"I'm thrilled by the incredible community response to our One Seattle Day of Service," Harrell said in a statement to KOMO News. "We have an opportunity to both give back to the city we love and set the One Seattle example for what we can accomplish when we unite around our common values and a common purpose. On Saturday, May 21, let's come together and do our part to support one another and help make Seattle a better place,"</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	<p>&gt;&gt;&gt;&gt;&gt; <i>To register for the Day of Service and to find a list of clean up events and locations around Seattle next Saturday: Go <a href="#">here</a></i></p>

HEADLINE	<b>05/14 Alarm: re-infections from waning immunity</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/doctors-say-covid-re-infections-stem-from-waning-immunity">https://komonews.com/news/local/doctors-say-covid-re-infections-stem-from-waning-immunity</a>
GIST	<p>Doctors say those re-infections are happening at an alarming rate because immunity is waning. Immunity from previous infections and immunity from vaccines just isn't cutting it with the latest variants.</p> <p>Virologists and health experts say they aren't surprised that people who got COVID once before are getting sick again.</p> <p>They also say it makes sense why young people between 18 and 34 are seeing the highest number of re-infections.</p> <p>As people go back to work and return to the things they enjoy, some businesses are relieved their staff wasn't hit as hard by COVID.</p> <p>KOMO News chatted with Molly Moon's CEO and founder Molly Moon Neitzel.</p> <p>"We are not seeing COVID much in our company. We did see a little wave a few weeks ago," said Moon Neitzel.</p> <p>The latest numbers from the Washington Department of Health though show that some people who were infected with COVID are getting hit with the virus again.</p> <p>And that's concerning.</p> <p>"I'm not looking forward to it. We're trying to be cautious as can be," said Haley Koenig.</p> <p>"I would believe it. It seems it is related to everybody opening up and going out," said Allison Capen.</p> <p>KOMO News checked in with Dr. Pavitra Roychoudhury with the UW Medicine Virology Lab.</p> <p>"My focus is on variants and all the variants that are circulating," said Roychoudhury.</p>

	<p>We asked her about the re-infections and the impact on our community.</p> <p>“Everything is opening up in society in terms of more social gatherings and interactions. But at the same time, immunity has been waning from vaccinations because it has been a while since people got that second dose,” said Roychoudhury.</p> <p>Many of the people who are getting re-infected are the people who first got COVID in the winter.</p> <p>“A lot of people got infected during the BA1 surge during the December period,” said Roychoudhury.</p> <p>New variants like BA2.12.1 are also a big concern.</p> <p>“It’s possible this variant might be escaping the immunity that people got during that surge. That’s one hypothesis. But we have to remember overall there are more infections too so,” said Roychoudhury.</p> <p>“Initially, it was thought that BA1 prior infection was conferring some protection against getting BA2. But now, we have an even more infectious variant called BA 2.12.1 which is circulating around the U.S. and BA2.12.1 is thought to be even more transmissible than BA2. And potentially evading some of the immune protections we have from both vaccinations as well as prior infection with BA1,” said Roychoudhury.</p> <p>“This is highly transmissible and immunoinvasive variant so it pretty expected that we’re going to start to see more reinfections as there is this combination of waning immunity and increased social gathering,” said Roychoudhury.</p> <p>Doctors say older groups have been boosted. Many younger people have not gotten boosted. And that could be another reason younger people are getting COVID.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/13 Seattle resumes 72hr parking rule</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/sdot-full-parking-enforcement-resumes-cars-cannot-be-parked-for-more-than-72-hours">https://www.q13fox.com/news/sdot-full-parking-enforcement-resumes-cars-cannot-be-parked-for-more-than-72-hours</a>
GIST	<p><b>SEATTLE</b> - The <a href="#">city of Seattle</a> is resuming full parking enforcement for any vehicle that has remained in one place for more than 72 hours.</p> <p>According to a release from the Seattle Department of <a href="#">Transportation</a> (SDOT), the city will return to the normal standards, which were temporarily paused in 2020 due to the <a href="#">Pandemic</a>. While full enforcement is resuming, parking officials will still place warnings on vehicles, giving owners enough time to move them before they get penalized.</p> <p>SDOT is asking vehicle owners to get back into the habit of regularly moving vehicles to avoid warnings and citations. In addition, people should check their block for temporary parking restriction signs, which can be placed with a minimum of 24-hours notice for things like utility work, cleaning or special events.</p> <p>If a car is towed from a public street, instructions to find the vehicle and documents required to release your vehicle are available on their website. The first step to find and reclaim your vehicle is to call Lincoln Towing at 206-364-2000, or search for your vehicle on Lincoln Towing’s website.</p> <p>If your car was towed from a private parking lot, look for posted signs with instructions and a phone number for the tow company which operates the lot. If you still cannot locate your vehicle, call the Community Safety and Communications Center at <a href="tel:206-625-5011">206-625-5011</a>.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/13 Alaska Air CEO: cancelations thru May</b>
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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/alaska-airlines-cancellations-ceo-says-ripple-effect-to-continue-causing-flight-disruptions-through-may">https://www.q13fox.com/news/alaska-airlines-cancellations-ceo-says-ripple-effect-to-continue-causing-flight-disruptions-through-may</a>
GIST	<p><b>SEATTLE</b> - <a href="#">Alaska Airline's CEO</a> said Friday that about 50 flights are still being canceled each day, and the month of May "will continue to be choppy."</p> <p>Ben Minicucci said in a video posted on YouTube that the outlook is better in "June and beyond" as they add 150 pilots, 200 reservation agents and 1,100 flight attendants.</p> <p>"I hear every day from friends, neighbors and guests about how disruptive our flight cancellations have been," said Minicucci. "Simply put - we had 63 fewer pilots than what we planned for when we built our scheduled. By the time we caught this error, April and May schedules were bid on by our pilots and flight attendants, making it impossible to sufficiently adjust schedules to avoid cancellations. This error has continued to have a ripple effect for many of the 1,200 flights that we operate every day."</p> <p>Minicucci apologized for "not living up to the commitment" of running a great operation.</p> <p>In April, <a href="#">thousands of travelers were delayed</a>, or re-routed, as a domino of cancellations affected airports. At the time, Alaska said the issues were dealing with an industry-wide pilot shortage paired with a backlog of training programs that impacted their flight crews. They announced a 2% reduction in total flights through June – however, issues are still unfolding.</p> <p>The cancellations spiked again at the beginning of May and continued into the month.</p> <p>Alaska Airlines pilots began to vote this week whether they want to <a href="#">go on strike</a>.</p> <p>The decision won't happen overnight. The pilots union will vote through much of May, but a spokesperson with <a href="#">Alaska Airlines</a> admits: the company believes the "strike-authorization ballot" will pass.</p> <p>"While talk of a 'strike' is concerning, especially for guests and the communities that rely on us, they don't happen quickly or without significant advance notice," said the spokesperson. "We're confident we can get a deal through mediation and believe in this process because it has worked for airlines for decades."</p> <p>In other words, while the strike-authorization vote will wrap up later this month – the fallout would not be immediate. A deal could still be struck before pilots would officially strike.</p> <p>"Alaska pilots are not looking to strike," said Capt. Will McQuillen, chairman of the Alaska Airlines ALPA MEC in April. "We are looking for improvements to our contract in line with the market but that will also allow our company to grow and remain successful and competitive. However, we are willing to take any lawful steps necessary, including a legal strike, to achieve the contract every Alaska pilot has earned."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/13 Amtrak Cascades Seattle to B.C. postpone</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/transportation/amtrak-cascades-from-seattle-to-vancouver-b-c-postponed-another-half-year/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/transportation/amtrak-cascades-from-seattle-to-vancouver-b-c-postponed-another-half-year/</a>
GIST	<p>Amtrak will postpone restoring its Cascades passenger-train service between Seattle and Vancouver, B.C., until a target date of December because the national railway lacks enough personnel.</p> <p>The service gap occurred despite the Biden administration's much-hyped \$66 billion allotted in the <a href="#">Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act</a> to catch up on maintenance and spread Amtrak service to new cities including Las Vegas, Phoenix, Columbus and Nashville.</p>



Transportation officials in Washington state hoped the trains would roll again by summer or even late spring, said Janet Matkin, rail spokesperson for the Washington State Department of Transportation, which announced the disappointing news Friday afternoon.

Amtrak doesn't have enough conductors, mechanics and onboard service staff yet to operate the trains, though new classes of conductors are being trained now, said a letter to Washington and Oregon rail directors from [Ray Lang, an Amtrak vice president](#). Lang notes that every region wants full service.

Approximately 159,000 people per year rode between Seattle and Vancouver, B.C., before the pandemic, or 290,000 when including stations between the big cities, said Matkin. Passenger fares traditionally cover about two-thirds of operation costs, while states cover the rest.

"Amtrak's lack of support for the Amtrak Cascades service cannot continue and Amtrak's plans to delay the re-start of Canadian service for seven months or more is not acceptable to WSDOT and ODOT," [says a response](#) co-signed by WSDOT Secretary Roger Millar and Oregon transportation Director Kris Strickler, who suggest at least partial service in the meantime. "However, the states cannot accept Amtrak's plan to provide no service at all."

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The state directors argue Amtrak is failing to fulfill its Cascades service agreement, for the sake of propping up its longer interstate routes.

Later this month, the Empire Builder will increase from five days a week to full seven-day service, [news outlets in Montana](#) are reporting.

It's been nearly a year since Amtrak President Stephen Gardner [visited King Street Station](#), with U.S. Rep. Rick Larsen, D-Wash., alongside, to celebrate the return of long-distance Coast Starlight trains to California and Empire Builder to Spokane and Chicago. Gardner highlighted a \$1.7 billion federal infusion to recall 1,200 workers from furlough. Staff for Larsen and Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-Wash., a leading advocate for rail projects, couldn't be immediately reached for response.

	<p>To reopen the Cascades line to Canada, Amtrak needs three more conductors, who need six to 12 months to win promotion from assistant conductor, Lang wrote. The conductor is responsible for passenger well-being, train equipment and connections, and warning the engineer of trackside hazards.</p> <p>WSDOT's Amtrak Cascades website Friday said Amtrak hadn't committed yet to a reopening date and recommended bus service by Cantrail. Meanwhile, <a href="#">Amtrak's schedule page</a> still says, "Train service in Canada reopens when the border reopens."</p> <p>Currently, three Cascades trains each direction travel daily between Seattle and Oregon, along with one Coast Starlight train each way.</p> <p>Amtrak is currently <a href="#">advertising 18 jobs in Seattle</a>, such as coach cleaners, chefs and electricians, among nearly 450 open positions nationwide.</p> <p><a href="#">Washington state lawmakers this year approved \$150 million</a> to study and plan high-speed rail between British Columbia, Washington and Oregon, perhaps replacing Amtrak someday. But such a vision is estimated to require at least \$42 billion and decades to construct.</p>
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## Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	05/14 Top websites collect typing before submit
SOURCE	<a href="https://arstechnica.com/information-technology/2022/05/some-top-100000-websites-collect-everything-you-type-before-you-hit-submit/">https://arstechnica.com/information-technology/2022/05/some-top-100000-websites-collect-everything-you-type-before-you-hit-submit/</a>
GIST	<p>When you sign up for a newsletter, make a hotel reservation, or check out online, you probably take for granted that if you mistype your email address three times or change your mind and X out of the page, it doesn't matter. Nothing actually happens until you hit the Submit button, right? Well, maybe not. As with so many assumptions about the web, this isn't always the case, according to <a href="#">new research</a>: A surprising number of websites are collecting some or all of your data as you type it into a digital form.</p> <p>Researchers from KU Leuven, Radboud University, and University of Lausanne crawled and analyzed the top 100,000 websites, looking at scenarios in which a user is visiting a site while in the European Union and visiting a site from the United States. They found that 1,844 websites gathered an EU user's email address without their consent, and a staggering 2,950 logged a US user's email in some form. Many of the sites seemingly do not intend to conduct the data-logging but incorporate third-party marketing and analytics services that cause the behavior.</p> <p>After specifically crawling sites for password leaks in May 2021, the researchers also found 52 websites in which third parties, including the Russian tech giant Yandex, were incidentally collecting password data before submission. The group disclosed their findings to these sites, and all 52 instances have since been resolved.</p> <p>"If there's a Submit button on a form, the reasonable expectation is that it does something—that it will submit your data when you click it," says Güneş Acar, a professor and researcher in Radboud University's digital security group and one of the leaders of the study. "We were super surprised by these results. We thought maybe we were going to find a few hundred websites where your email is collected before you submit, but this exceeded our expectations by far."</p> <p>The researchers, who will <a href="#">present</a> their findings at the Usenix security conference in August, say they were inspired to investigate what they call "leaky forms" by media reports, <a href="#">particularly</a> from <a href="#">Gizmodo</a>, about third parties collecting form data regardless of submission status. They point out that, at its core, the behavior is similar to so-called keyloggers, which are typically <a href="#">malicious programs</a> that log everything a target types. But on a mainstream top-1,000 site, users probably won't expect to have their information</p>

keylogged. And in practice, the researchers saw a few variations of the behavior. Some sites logged data keystroke by keystroke, but many grabbed complete submissions from one field when users clicked to the next.

"In some cases, when you click the next field, they collect the previous one, like you click the password field and they collect the email, or you just click anywhere and they collect all the information immediately," says Asuman Senol, a privacy and identity researcher at KU Leuven and one of the study co-authors. "We didn't expect to find thousands of websites; and in the US, the numbers are really high, which is interesting."

The researchers say that the regional differences may be related to companies being more cautious about user tracking, and even potentially integrating with fewer third parties, because of the EU's General Data Protection Regulation. But they emphasize that this is just one possibility, and the study didn't examine explanations for the disparity.

Through a substantial effort to notify websites and third parties collecting data in this way, the researchers found that one explanation for some of the unexpected data collection may have to do with the challenge of differentiating a "submit" action from other user actions on certain web pages. But the researchers emphasize that from a privacy perspective, this is not an adequate justification.

Since completing the [paper](#), the group also had a discovery about Meta Pixel and TikTok Pixel, invisible marketing trackers that services embed on their websites to track users across the web and show them ads. Both claimed in their documentation that customers could turn on "automatic advanced matching," which would trigger data collection when a user submitted a form. In practice, though, the researchers found that these tracking pixels were grabbing hashed email addresses, an obscured version of email addresses used to identify web users across platforms, before submission. For US users, 8,438 sites may have been leaking data to Meta, Facebook's parent company, through pixels, and 7,379 sites may be impacted for EU users. For TikTok Pixel, the group found 154 sites for US users and 147 for EU users.

The researchers filed a bug report with Meta on March 25, and the company quickly assigned an engineer to the case, but the group has not heard an update since. The researchers notified TikTok on April 21—they discovered the TikTok behavior more recently—and have not heard back. Meta and TikTok did not immediately return WIRED's request for comment about the findings.

"The privacy risks for users are that they will be tracked even more efficiently; they can be tracked across different websites, across different sessions, across mobile and desktop," Acar says. "An email address is such a useful identifier for tracking, because it's global, it's unique, it's constant. You can't clear it like you clear your cookies. It's a very powerful identifier."

Acar also points out that, as tech companies look to phase out cookie-based tracking in a nod to privacy concerns, marketers and other analysts will rely more and more heavily on static IDs like phone numbers and email addresses.

Since the findings indicate that deleting data in a form before submitting it may not be enough to protect yourself from all collection, the researchers created a [Firefox extension](#) called LeakInspector to detect rogue form collection. And they say they hope their findings will raise awareness about the issue, not only for regular web users but for website developers and administrators who can proactively check whether their own systems or any of the third parties they're using are collecting data from forms without consent.

Leaky forms are just one more type of data collection to be wary of in an already extremely crowded online field.

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HEADLINE	05/13 AvosLocker strikes 2 <sup>nd</sup> health care system
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cyberscoop.com/ransomware-us-hospital-system-healthcare/">https://www.cyberscoop.com/ransomware-us-hospital-system-healthcare/</a>

## GIST

AvosLocker, a prolific ransomware group that was the subject of a recent joint FBI and U.S. Treasury Department warning, claimed this week that it had hit a Dallas-based nonprofit Catholic health system with more than 600 facilities across four U.S. states, Mexico, Chile and Colombia.

The attack on CHRISTUS Health marks the second health care system AvosLocker targeted in the last two months.

Michigan-based McKenzie Health System [began notifying customers this week](#) that patients' personal data had been stolen from the company's network in a "security incident" that "disrupted" some of its IT systems in March. The company did not identify the attacker, but AvosLocker posted purported McKenzie data to its dark web leak site April 6.

A spokesperson for McKenzie Health System could not be reached for comment.

Katy Kiser, CHRISTUS Health's director of communications, told CyberScoop Friday that the company's IT staff learned of "unauthorized access" in one of its regions — which the company refers to as "ministries" — sometime in early May. The company is working with cybersecurity professionals to assess the situation, she said, but so far it appears to be "limited" and said the attack "didn't impact patient care."

AvosLocker operates like many other ransomware groups in that it offers ransomware as a service, and works with "affiliates" who target victims and split the proceeds with a core group of developers.

The group was first observed advertising on dark web forums for affiliates on July 4, 2021, [according to Palo Alto Networks' Unit 42](#). As of March 2022 the group had hit more than 50 organizations around the world, according to [a notice posted by cybersecurity firm Hive Pro](#).

Not much is known about the people behind the group, Brett Callow, a threat analyst at cybersecurity firm Emsisoft who follows the ransomware world closely, told CyberScoop Friday. A notice on the group's dark web leak site, where the group posts victim data and advertises for new affiliates, said the group doesn't "allow attacks to post-Soviet Union countries," but there's no indication as to the group's location.

In March the FBI and the U.S. Department of Treasury [issued a joint notice](#) about the group with technical details about the group's ransomware and how organizations can tell if they've been hit by the group.

Ransomware attacks targeting health care operators are not uncommon. There have been 254 ransomware incidents targeting facilities providing patient care between June 2020 and April 30 worldwide, [according to data collected by the Geneva-based CyberPeace Institute](#). The organization's data tracker suggests the incidents occur nearly three times per week in 28 countries. More broadly, the organization's data counts more than 420 cyberattacks on the health care sector across 37 countries, "which is only a fraction of the full scale of the problem."

While it's not fully clear how cyberattacks impact hospitals, [a 2021 analysis](#) from the Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Information Security Agency found that attacks can lead to patient care issues in the days and weeks after an attack, especially when facilities are already overwhelmed with issues such as COVID-19 care.

There have also been claims that specific incidents have contributed to deaths. A July 2019 ransomware attack on a hospital network in Alabama may have contributed to the death of a newborn, according to a lawsuit filed against the hospital, [according to reporting from the Wall Street Journal](#) (the hospital denied any wrongdoing on its part). And in August 2020, [a German woman may have died](#) in part because a ransomware attack on a hospital there forced her ambulance to divert to a separate hospital, delaying care — although [police couldn't make a definitive connection](#).

	“Ransomware attacks on health care systems put lives at risk, it’s as simple as that,” Callow said. “And the true impact of attacks on people’s health may not be immediately apparent as delayed care could potentially impact patient’ outcomes weeks, months or even years after the event.”
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HEADLINE	05/13 New ‘Eternity’ malware-as-a-service
SOURCE	<a href="https://threatpost.com/telegram-spread-eternity-maas/179623/">https://threatpost.com/telegram-spread-eternity-maas/179623/</a>
GIST	<p>Cybercriminals are promoting a new, modular malware-as-a-service offering that allows would-be attackers to choose from a cornucopia of threats <a href="#">via a Telegram channel</a> that to date has more than 500 subscribers, researchers have found.</p> <p>The new malware service, dubbed the Eternity Project by the threat actors behind it, allows cybercriminals to target potential victims with a customized threat offering based on individual modules they can buy for prices ranging from \$90 to \$490, researchers from security firm Cyble wrote in <a href="#">a blog post</a> published Thursday.</p> <p>The modules include a stealer, clipper, worm, miner and ransomware, depending on what type of attack a threat actors wants to mount, according to the post. Developers behind the project also are working on a future module that offers distributed denial of service (DDoS) bots.</p> <p>Eternity—which researchers discovered on a TOR website, where the malware-as-a-service also is for sale—demonstrates the “significant increase in cybercrime through <a href="#">Telegram</a> channels and cybercrime forums,” researchers wrote in the post. This is likely because threat actors can sell their products without any regulation, they said.</p> <p>Each module is sold individually and has different functionality that researchers suspect is being repurposed from code in an existing <a href="#">Github repository</a>, which project developers are then modifying and selling under a new name, according to Cyble.</p> <p>“Our analysis also indicated that the <a href="#">Jester</a> Stealer could also be rebranded from this particular Github project which indicates some links between the two threat actors,” they wrote.</p> <p><b>Specific Modules and Functionality</b></p> <p>Threat actors are selling the Eternity Stealer for \$260 as an annual subscription. The module steals passwords, cookies, credit cards and crypto-wallets from various applications—such as all the most popular browsers, messaging apps and cryptocurrency wallets—on the victim’s machine and sends them to the threat actor’s Telegram Bot.</p> <p>The Eternity Miner, a malicious program that uses the infected device to mine cryptocurrency, sells for \$90 for an annual subscription. Features of the miner include a small file size; silent Monero mining; the ability to restart when killed; and the ability to remain hidden from the task manager, researchers wrote.</p> <p>The Eternity Clipper—malware that monitors the clipboard of an infected machine for cryptocurrency wallets and replaces them with the threat actor’s crypto-wallet addresses—is being sold for \$110. The malware, like the miner, also can hide from the task manager, as well as includes other features.</p> <p>The Eternity Ransomware—the most expensive of the offerings—sells for \$490 and offers encryption of all documents, photos and databases on disks, local shares and USB drives both online and offline.</p> <p>Attackers can set a time limit after which the files cannot be decrypted and can set the ransomware to execute on a specific date, among other features.</p> <p>Threat actors are selling the Eternity Worm, a virus that spreads through infected machines via files and networks, for \$390. Features of the worm include its ability to spread through the following: USB Drives, local network shares, various local files, cloud drives such as GoogleDrive or DropBox, and others. It also</p>



can send worm-infected messages to people's Discord and Telegram channels and friends, researchers said.

As mentioned before, developers are currently working on another module to offer DDoS bots as a service, though researchers did not specify a time frame for its availability.

### **Proceed with Caution**

The existence of Eternity and its ability to offer cyber-crime options to the masses should be a cautionary tale to web users never to save credentials on a machine, lest the information falls into the wrong hands, one security professional noted.

"Seriously, when your browser asks you to allow it to remember your credentials, your answer should always be 'no, or never,'" Ron Bradley, vice president at [Shared Assessments](#), wrote in an email to Threatpost. "Unfortunately, browser manufacturers have duped users into a sense of security by allowing them to remember sensitive information including passwords, credit cards, addresses, etc. without regard to the risk they are taking."

People should work on the assumption that their credentials have already been compromised rather than feeling a false sense of safety with saving sensitive data to a machine, and take steps to protect private information that reflects this assumption, he said.

"Above all else, use multiple layers of defense," Bradley observed. "Like it or not, we're at war when it comes to protecting our private information. Protective gear and defensive weapons are not optional in this day and age."

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HEADLINE	05/15 Europe agrees to adopt new NIS2 directive
SOURCE	<a href="https://thehackernews.com/2022/05/europe-agrees-to-adopt-new-nis2.html">https://thehackernews.com/2022/05/europe-agrees-to-adopt-new-nis2.html</a>
GIST	<p>The European Parliament announced a "provisional agreement" aimed at improving cybersecurity and resilience of both public and private sector entities in the European Union.</p> <p>The revised directive, called "NIS2" (short for network and information systems), is expected to replace the <a href="#">existing legislation</a> on cybersecurity that was established in July 2016.</p> <p>The revamp sets ground rules, requiring companies in energy, transport, financial markets, health, and digital infrastructure sectors to adhere to risk management measures and reporting obligations.</p> <p>Among the provisions in the new legislation are flagging cybersecurity incidents to authorities within 24 hours, patching software vulnerabilities, and readying risk management measures to secure networks, failing which can incur monetary penalties.</p> <p>"The directive will formally establish the European Cyber Crises Liaison Organization Network, EU-CyCLONe, which will support the coordinated management of large-scale cybersecurity incidents," the Council of the European Union <a href="#">said</a> in a statement last week.</p> <p>The development closely follows the European Commission's <a href="#">plans</a> to "detect, report, block, and remove" child sexual abuse images and videos from online service providers, including messaging apps, prompting concerns that it may undermine end-to-end encryption (E2EE) protections.</p> <p>The draft version of NIS2 explicitly spells out that the use of E2EE "should be reconciled with the Member States' powers to ensure the protection of their essential security interests and public security, and to permit the investigation, detection and prosecution of criminal offenses in compliance with Union law."</p>



	<p>It also stressed that "Solutions for lawful access to information in end-to-end encrypted communications should maintain the effectiveness of encryption in protecting privacy and security of communications, while providing an effective response to crime."</p> <p>That said, the directive will not apply to organizations in verticals such as defense, national security, public security, law enforcement, judiciary, parliaments, and central banks.</p> <p>As part of the proposed agreement, the European Union member states are mandated to incorporate the provisions into their national law within a period of 21 months from when the directive goes into force.</p> <p>"The number, magnitude, sophistication, frequency and impact of cybersecurity incidents are increasing, and present a major threat to the functioning of network and information systems," the Council noted in the draft.</p> <p>"Cybersecurity preparedness and effectiveness are therefore now more essential than ever to the proper functioning of the internal market."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/14 Conti escalates rhetoric on Costa Rica</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/ransomware/conti-ransomware-gang-calls-for-costa-rican-citizens-to-revolt-if-government-doesnt-pay">https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/ransomware/conti-ransomware-gang-calls-for-costa-rican-citizens-to-revolt-if-government-doesnt-pay</a>
GIST	<p>Conti is escalating its rhetoric to force Costa Rica to pay a ransom after the nation <a href="#">was breached last month</a>, including calls for potential regime change from its newly elected president to assemble a government more willing to pay.</p> <p>New President Rodrigo Chaves Robles declared a state of national emergency last week <a href="#">rather than pay</a> an alleged \$10 million ransom.</p> <p>"I appeal to every resident of Costa Rica, go to your government and organize rallies so that they would pay us as soon as possible," <a href="#">Conti</a> wrote on its leaks site in a new update. "[I]f your current government cannot stabilize the situation? maybe it's worth changing it?"</p> <p>In the same missive, Conti issued a final deadline of one week to pay before the encryption keys would be deleted. The group also chided the Chaves government for potentially putting too much faith in the United States to bail it out, writing "[W]e believe that the country is so aware of the views of the United States that the Americans simply sacrifice it in this regard. why not just buy a key?"</p> <p>Conti encrypted data from the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry Labor and Social Security, the Fund for Social Development and Family Allowances and a University of Costa Rica site in Alajuela.</p> <p>Brett Callow, a ransomware expert with Emsisoft, said Conti's scattered list of threats might be due to the group running low on cards to play to coax payment. Even before the country declared a state of national emergency, Conti claimed to have leaked 97% of the more than 670 gigabytes of data it had exfiltrated.</p> <p>"Or it could be a warning to other victims: you don't want to suffer like Costa Rica did. Payment is the least painful option," he said via electronic chat.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/14 Hackers try, fail invade Brazil vote system</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.securityweek.com/hired-hackers-try-and-fail-invade-brazil-vote-system">https://www.securityweek.com/hired-hackers-try-and-fail-invade-brazil-vote-system</a>
GIST	More than 20 would-be hackers gathered in the Brazilian electoral authority's headquarters in the capital this week. Their mission: infiltrate the nation's voting system ahead of a hotly anticipated race in October.

Their 3-day battery of attempted assaults ended Friday and was part of planned testing that happens every election year, usually proceeding without incident or, for that matter, drawing any attention. But with President Jair Bolsonaro continuously sowing doubt about the system's reliability, the test took on an outsized significance as the electoral authority, known as the TSE, seeks to shore up confidence in the upcoming general elections.

Analysts and members of the TSE said the test's results were more encouraging than ever. All the experts attempting to disrupt the system — among whom were Federal Police agents and university professors in engineering, information technology, data security and computer science — had failed.

"No attack managed to alter the destination of a vote in the electronic ballot," Julio Valente da Costa, the TSE's secretary of information technology, told The Associated Press in an interview afterward. "The importance of this test is for us to rest assured, at least about all the technology and computing components for the elections."

When Bolsonaro won the presidential race four years ago, he claimed he had actually secured victory in the first round, not the runoff weeks later. The former army captain has repeatedly made accusations the voting system used for three decades is vulnerable, and at times said he possesses proof fraud occurred, but has never presented any evidence.

Last year, Bolsonaro suggested the election could be canceled unless a voting reform was passed in Congress. But the proposed constitutional change did not garner enough votes.

Analysts and politicians have expressed worry that far-right Bolsonaro, who is trailing leftist former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in all early polls, is laying the groundwork to follow the lead of his ally, former U.S. President Donald Trump, and reject election results.

The TSE has gone to great lengths to bring more openness to the electoral process, even inviting the armed forces to sit on its transparency commission, though the military's role in elections is traditionally limited to carrying ballots to isolated communities and beefing up security in violent regions.

Some political and military analysts have argued the TSE's olive branch proved to be a mistake as tensions have since escalated.

An army general who is part of a commission submitted dozens of questions to the TSE earlier this year.

"(The armed forces) are being guided to attack the process and try to discredit it," Supreme Court Justice Luis Roberto Barroso, who presided over the TSE until February, said during a conference with a German university on March 24. His comments drew backlash from Bolsonaro's Defense Ministry, which issued a statement saying the accusation was "a serious insult."

Barroso's successor at the TSE, Supreme Court Justice Luiz Edson Fachin, said Thursday the elections will be taken care of by "unarmed forces," adding that the TSE's declaration of voting results will be final.

Still, some analysts remain concerned.

"The armed forces today are part of Bolsonaro's government, from a political standpoint, and they are helping the president's efforts to corrode the institutions from the inside," João Martins Filho, a military expert who used to lead the Brazilian Association of Defense Studies, said by phone. "That's no small thing. It's very dangerous."

Last week, as the TSE prepared for its test, Bolsonaro pledged that his party will seek an external audit of the system before the first round of voting.

The TSE's test has its origins in November, when experts selected 29 methods to hack into the voting system. Five managed to cause some interference, which was minor and didn't affect results, the TSE said

	<p>at the time. Those five plots were assessed over the three-day test this week, which showed all issues had been resolved, Sandro Nunes Vieira, a TSE member, told journalists after its completion. A commission will evaluate the results and publish an official report at the end of May.</p> <p>Carlos Alberto da Silva, a professor of data security at the Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul, was part of the group that tried to break into the system. He and a pupil had discovered a loophole in the audio output that could violate the vote's confidentiality. On Friday, he told the AP the issue had been resolved by the TSE.</p> <p>More tests will follow in August, when the TSE conducts something of an election day simulation. That's when Brazil's presidential campaign will be officially getting underway, although both Bolsonaro and da Silva are already holding rallies and events.</p> <p>The TSE will continue conducting security tests until 15 days before the election. Since 1996, it has never once turned up evidence of mass vote fraud.</p> <p>Wilson Vicente Ruggiero, a computer engineering professor at the University of Sao Paulo who is collaborating with the TSE, told the AP that "today's process is much safer than the one of the past."</p> <p>"There's no reason to fear the ballot or the process itself could be rigged," Ruggiero said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/13 Cyber trends from Russia war in Ukraine</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/cyber-trends-russia-ukraine-war/">https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/cyber-trends-russia-ukraine-war/</a>
GIST	<p>The cyber implications of the Russia-Ukraine conflict were discussed by a panel of international security leaders during the opening plenary session at <a href="#">CYBERUK 2022</a>.</p> <p>The discussion was moderated by NCSC's CEO Lindy Cameron, who was joined on the stage by the director of the US' National Security Agency (NSA), Robert Joyce, head of the Australian Cyber Security Centre, Abigail Bradshaw and executive director of The European Union Agency for Cybersecurity, Juhan Lepassaar.</p> <p>Detailing the current cyber trends he is observing in his role at NSA, Joyce noted that "ransomware attacks are actually down" in the past few months. This is partly due to the fallout from the Russia-Ukraine conflict, with unprecedented sanctions making it harder to move money around. Worryingly, however, the number of zero-day vulnerabilities is "off the charts." Joyce added that there are signs of cyber spillover from nation-state activity emanating from the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This is "impacting civil society, and that's a real problem."</p> <p>Bradshaw said she was encouraged by growing government involvement in cybersecurity, particularly recent actions taken by the Biden administration. These include last year's <a href="#">executive order</a> mandating zero trust principles among federal agencies and <a href="#">recently passed legislation</a> mandating critical infrastructure organizations report cyber-incidents. She believes such approaches "will have quite a lot of impact."</p> <p>The cyber aspect of the Russia-Ukraine conflict was then discussed by The European Union Agency for Cybersecurity's Lepassaar. He observed that while there have been spillovers from cyber-attacks relating to the war, this has not been as significant as expected. One aspect that has particularly surprised Lepassaar has been "the level of hacktivism" that has occurred. This includes groups like Anonymous taking Russian government websites offline or pro-Kremlin groups supporting Russian disinformation campaigns. This trend should be viewed with concern in his view.</p> <p>Encouragingly, he noted there has been "a good deal of resilience from the Ukrainian state in maintaining their connectivity." This is highlighted by their ability to hold press conferences in besieged cities. It also shows the value of partnerships, according to Lepassaar, enabling the Ukrainians to build "distributed systems that are difficult to take down and attack," which "is a lesson to all of us."</p>

Joyce said that in the US, the crisis has led to an “operationalization of our intelligence,” with the government more willing to make the information public. In cybersecurity, “we’re trying to take the intelligence about threats and operations and get that out there.” This is highlighted by [numerous recent advisories](#) published by agencies like CISA, often in conjunction with allies.

He concurred with Lepassaar’s observations about the impressive cyber-resilience being shown by Ukraine during this conflict. “I can think of at least eight unique variants of wipers that have been deployed against Ukraine, and they responded, kept their systems up and rebuilt their systems,” noted Joyce. This was partly due to the emergency plans they had developed amid a continuous barrage of cyber-attacks from Russia since 2014. “They have been able to practice and they understand what their incident response is,” he noted.

Cameron then asked Bradshaw about the relevance of the cyber aspect of the conflict to the Asia-Pacific region. She expressed concern that other nation-state actors with potentially nefarious aims “will be watching this playbook for the purposes of learning from its highs and lows and fine-tuning that.” In addition, she believes the Ukrainians robust cyber-defenses emphasized the importance of government-industry partnerships in this space.

Bradshaw also expressed her surprise at the scale and impact of hacktivism in the conflict, which she described as “civil vigilantism.” This can “produce extreme unpredictability,” leading to outcomes like “wrongful attribution, retribution and escalation, which is problematic.”

She added that it is vital to call out these activities as they “break those global norms we hold so dear.”

Encouragingly, the panel observed that business leaders are becoming more attuned to the need to protect against cyber-threats resulting from the Russia-Ukraine war. Cameron said: “I am seeing chief executives asking their security teams the right questions rather than leaving them to it.” This is also the case at government level, and increasingly “we’re seeing politicians talking about cybersecurity at a strategic level.”

Joyce agreed that events over the past 12 months, including the Russia-Ukraine war, have focused minds in respect of cybersecurity. “We have spent many years focusing on counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism; we haven’t been resourcing our IT and weapons systems which are computers these days.” He added that “we will now do the things we should have done 10-20 years ago.”

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HEADLINE	05/15 Fake Pixelmon NFT site infects: malware
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/fake-pixelmon-nft-site-infects-you-with-password-stealing-malware/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/fake-pixelmon-nft-site-infects-you-with-password-stealing-malware/</a>
GIST	<p>A fake Pixelmon NFT site entices fans with free tokens and collectibles while infecting them with malware that steals their cryptocurrency wallets.</p> <p>Pixelmon is a <a href="#">popular NFT project</a> whose roadmap includes creating an online metaverse game where you can collect, train, and battle other players using pixelmon pets.</p> <p>With close to 200,000 Twitter followers and over 25,000 Discord members, the project has garnered a lot of interest.</p> <p><b>Impersonating the Pixelmon project</b></p> <p>To take advantage of this interest, threat actors have copied the legitimate pixelmon.club website and created a fake version at pixelmon[.]pw to distribute malware.</p> <p>This site is almost a replica of the legitimate site, but instead of offering a demo of the project's game, the malicious site offers executables that install password-stealing malware on a device.</p>

The site is offering a file called Installer.zip that contains an executable that appears to be corrupt and does not infect users with any malware.

However, MalwareHunterTeam, who [first discovered](#) this malicious site, found other malicious files distributed by the site that allowed us to see what malware it was spreading.

One of the files distributed by this malicious site is setup.zip, which contains the setup.lnk file. Setup.lnk is a Windows shortcut that will execute a PowerShell command to download a system32.hta file from pixelmon[.]pw.

When BleepingComputer tested these malicious payloads, the System32.hta file downloaded Vidar, a password-stealing malware that is not as commonly used as it was in the past. This was confirmed by security researcher [Fumik0](#), who has previously analyzed this malware family.

When executed, the threat actor's Vidar sample will connect to a Telegram channel and retrieve the IP address of a malware's command and control server.

The malware will then retrieve a configuration command from the C2 and download further modules to be used to steal data from the infected device.

The Vidar malware can steal passwords from browsers and applications and search a computer for files that match specific names, which are then uploaded to the threat actor.

As this is an NFT site, the expectation is that visitors will have cryptocurrency wallets installed on their computers. Due to this, the threat actors emphasize searching for and stealing files related to cryptocurrency.

While the site is currently not distributing a working payload, BleepingComputer has seen evidence that the threat actors continue to modify the site over the past few days, as payloads that were available two days ago are no longer present.

Due to the activity on the site, we can expect this campaign to continue to be active and for working threats to be added soon.

With NFT projects being overwhelmed with scams designed to steal your cryptocurrency, you should always triple-check that the URL you are visiting is, in fact, related to the project you are interested in.

Furthermore, never execute any executables from unknown websites without first scanning them with antivirus software or using [VirusTotal](#).

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HEADLINE	<b>05/13 US signs onto Budapest Convention</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.darkreading.com/threat-intelligence/us-agrees-to-international-electronic-cybercrime-evidence">https://www.darkreading.com/threat-intelligence/us-agrees-to-international-electronic-cybercrime-evidence</a>
GIST	<p>The US Department of Justice has signed on to the Budapest Convention international treaty, which allows its 66 member countries to expedite the sharing of electronic evidence to more effectively track down cybercriminals, wherever they are on the globe.</p> <p>"The Budapest Convention is a truly remarkable international instrument," Deputy Assistant Attorney General Richard Downing said. "Its technology-neutral approach to cybercrime has created an enduring framework for cooperation that ensures law enforcement has the tools they need to respond to new criminal methods."</p>

	<p>Signed by Downing, <a href="#">the agreement</a>, according to the DoJ, makes it easier for law enforcement agencies to obtain subscriber and traffic data from service providers for <a href="#">cybercrime investigations</a>. The agreement followed nearly four years of negotiations, the DoJ noted.</p> <p>"It is our collective vision that every country that is serious about fighting cybercrime and that provides for the protection of human rights should become party to the Budapest Convention," Downing added. "The Convention strikes the right balance between imposing obligations on nations to have robust laws and capabilities and providing the flexibility necessary for nations with different legal systems to join."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/13 Most firms hit by ransom would pay it again</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theregister.com/2022/05/13/organizations_pay_ransomware/?&amp;web_view=true">https://www.theregister.com/2022/05/13/organizations_pay_ransomware/?&amp;web_view=true</a>
GIST	<p>Almost nine in 10 organizations that have suffered a ransomware attack would choose to pay the ransom if hit again, according to a new report, compared with two-thirds of those that have not experienced an attack.</p> <p>The findings come from a report titled "How business executives perceive ransomware threat" by security company Kaspersky, which states that ransomware has become an ever-present threat, with 64 percent of companies surveyed already having suffered an attack, but more worryingly, that executives seem to believe that paying the ransom is a reliable way of addressing the issue.</p> <p>The report, available <a href="#">here</a>, is based on research involving 900 respondents across North America, South America, Africa, Russia, Europe, and Asia-Pacific. The respondents were in senior non-IT management roles at companies between 50 and 1,000 employees.</p> <p>Kaspersky claims that in 88 percent of organizations that have had to deal with a ransomware incident, business leaders said they would choose to pay the money if faced with another attack. In contrast, among those that have not so far suffered a ransomware attack, only 67 percent would be willing to pay, and they would be less inclined to do so immediately.</p> <p>The report also found that those companies that have been the victim of an attack are also more likely to pay up as early as possible in order to regain access to data, or will pay after just a brief period of time spent attempting to recover their encrypted data.</p> <p>This willingness for companies to stump up the cash could be attributed to managers having little awareness of how to respond to such threats, according to Kaspersky. Management may also be unprepared for how long it may take to restore data, with some businesses losing more revenue while their data is being recovered than by just paying the ransom.</p> <p>However, security experts and government agencies strongly recommend that organizations do not pay up for ransomware attacks as this simply validates this kind of activity as a viable business model for criminals. But this does not help much if your organization is affected, as Kaspersky acknowledges.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/13 Ransom attacker's note to victim's printer</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.zdnet.com/article/these-ransomware-attackers-sent-their-ransom-note-to-the-victims-printer/?&amp;web_view=true">https://www.zdnet.com/article/these-ransomware-attackers-sent-their-ransom-note-to-the-victims-printer/?&amp;web_view=true</a>
GIST	<p>A hacking group that conducts cyber-espionage campaigns and ransomware attacks is targeting organisations in Europe and the United States.</p> <p><a href="#">Cybersecurity researchers at Secureworks</a> have detailed a string of cyberattacks involving <a href="#">ransomware</a> and data theft that took place in early 2022 to an Iranian hacking group they refer to as Cobalt Mirage – also known as <a href="#">APT35</a>, <a href="#">Charming Kitten</a>, <a href="#">Phosphorus</a> and <a href="#">TA453</a> by other research groups.</p>



Among the attacks is an incident targeting a US local government network in March 2022, which Secureworks researchers have attributed to Cobalt Mirage due to hallmarks of previously uncovered attacks by the group.

These include exploiting the [ProxyShell vulnerabilities](#) to deploy Fast Reverse Proxy client (FRPC) and enable remote access to vulnerable systems, along with the use of infrastructure that matches patterns associated with the threat group.

While the initial means of compromise in this attack is still unclear, researchers note how the attackers likely exploited unpatched [Log4j vulnerabilities](#) despite a patch being available. There's evidence that this initial exploitation may have occurred as early as January 2022.

Most of the intrusion activity spanned a four-day period in March, with the key aim of the activity based around scanning the network and stealing data. Researchers note that this tactic is strange, as like other attacks detected during the period, the targets had no strategic or political value to Iran.

After the March 2022 intrusion was detected and disrupted, no further malicious activity was observed.

Researchers suggest that the main motivation behind this attack, and others is financial gain, but it's unclear how exactly the attackers would look to profit from it.

"While the threat actors appear to have had a reasonable level of success gaining initial access to a wide range of targets, their ability to capitalize on that access for financial gain or intelligence collection appears limited," Secureworks Counter Threat Unit (CTU) researchers wrote in a blog post.

No ransomware was deployed in the attack against the undisclosed US local government victim, but researchers note that Cobalt Mirage does engage in ransomware attacks – as another victim discovered in January described as a 'U.S. philanthropic organization'.

According to Secureworks researchers who investigated the incident, attackers used ProxyShell and [Microsoft Exchange vulnerabilities](#) to move around the network and remotely gain access to accounts, before eventually triggering a BitLocker ransomware attack.

Unusually, the ransom note was sent to a printer on the network and printed out on paper, detailing an email address and contact details. While Cobalt Mirage has links to state-backed hacking operations, in this case, the ransomware is being deployed as a purely financially motivated attack. Ransomware ransom notes are more typically left either on screens or on servers.

"The threat actors completed the attack with an unusual tactic of sending a ransom note to a local printer. The note includes a contact email address and Telegram account to discuss decryption and recovery. This approach suggests a small operation that relies on manual processes to map victims to the encryption keys used to lock their data," the security researchers said.

In both incidents detailed by researchers, attackers were able to gain access to networks by exploiting unpatched critical cybersecurity vulnerabilities. In order to protect networks against cyberattacks, it's recommended that [security patches are applied as quickly as possible](#) in order to prevent potential intruders exploiting known vulnerabilities.

Researchers also recommend implementing [multi-factor authentication](#), and [monitoring for unauthorised or suspicious use](#) of tools and file-sharing services, which could indicate attackers are in the network.

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HEADLINE	05/13 Italy CSIRT: 'slow HTTP' DDoS attacks
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/italian-cert-hacktivists-hit-govt-sites-in-slow-http-ddos-attacks/?web_view=true">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/italian-cert-hacktivists-hit-govt-sites-in-slow-http-ddos-attacks/?web_view=true</a>

GIST	<p>Italy's Computer Security Incident Response Team (CSIRT) has disclosed recent DDoS attacks against crucial government sites in the country over the past couple of days.</p> <p>DDoS (distributed denial of service) is an attack that aims to deplete a server's available resources, making it unable to respond to legitimate user requests and rendering the sites it hosts inaccessible.</p> <p>Pro-Russian hackers known as the Killnet group claimed responsibility for the attacks and are the same group that launched similar attacks <a href="#">against Romanian portals</a> and <a href="#">the Bradley Airport</a> in the US.</p> <p>In response to news stories about the DDoS attacks against Italy, Killnet published a message to Telegram stating that further attacks may be coming in the future.</p> <p>"Our Legion conducts military cyber exercises in your countries in order to improve their skills. Everything happens similarly to your actions - the Italians and the Spaniards are going to learn how to kill people in Ukraine. Our Legion is learning to kill your servers!," a Killnet representative posted to their Telegram channel.</p> <p>"You must understand that this is training. Don't make too much noise, I'm sick of the amount of news about attacks on the Senate. I give you my word of honor that our cyber army will soon finish training in your territory, and we will go on the offensive. It will happen suddenly and very quickly."</p> <p><b>Killnet's attacks are effective</b></p> <p>As part of the announcement, CSIRT explained that the attacks on the country's government, ministry, parliament, and even army websites, used the so-called "<a href="#">Slow HTTP</a>" technique.</p> <p>This method is based on sending one HTTP request at a time to web servers but sets the request at a very slow transmission rate or makes it incomplete, leaving the server waiting for the next request.</p> <p>The server detects the incoming communication and allocates resources dedicated to waiting for the remaining data. When there are too many of these types of requests, the server is overwhelmed and cannot take any more connections, making the site inaccessible.</p> <p>"This type of attack is more effective in the case of using POST requests, as they are also used to send considerable amounts of data to the web server." - explains <a href="#">CSIRT's announcement</a>.</p> <p>CSIRT characterizes "slow HTTP" as an unusual type of DDoS attack, warning system administrators that their existing defenses may not be effective if they are not targeted towards the attack.</p> <p><i>"With regard to the recent DDOS attacks that occurred starting from 11 May last against national and international subjects, it was found that they were carried out using techniques that differ from the most common DDOS attacks of volumetric type 1, thus passing unnoticed to the protection systems commonly used on the market against this type of attack as they occur using a limited bandwidth."</i></p>
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HEADLINE	05/14 El Salvador president went all-in on bitcoin
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/el-salvadors-president-went-all-in-on-bitcoin-then-it-tanked-11652540400?mod=hp_listb_pos1">https://www.wsj.com/articles/el-salvadors-president-went-all-in-on-bitcoin-then-it-tanked-11652540400?mod=hp_listb_pos1</a>
GIST	<p>The plunging value of bitcoin has hurt investors in cryptocurrency everywhere. The stakes are especially high in El Salvador, the indebted Central American country whose president has spent hundreds of millions of dollars in taxpayer money buying bitcoin and rolling it out as a national currency.</p> <p>The country's planned placement of an exotic \$1 billion bond that bets on a rise in bitcoin's value has stalled, according to the country's officials, and the market value of El Salvador's \$100 million in bitcoin holdings has dropped by about a third, squeezing the country's finances further and raising the odds that it will default on its more than \$24 billion in sovereign debt, economists say.</p>

The administration of President Nayib Bukele has pledged to meet the country's debt payments. Since a sovereign default could hamper Mr. Bukele's potential re-election ambitions, "the government will do everything in its power to avoid it," said former central bank governor Carlos Acevedo.

To avoid a default, El Salvador needs hard currency to pay for imports like oil and make an \$800 million bond payment in January. Economic turmoil risks sparking a fresh wave of migrants to the U.S. One in four Salvadorans live abroad, mostly in the U.S., and about three of every 10 dollars in the country's economy come from remittances.

Since the impoverished nation adopted the dollar as its national currency two decades ago, El Salvador can't print its own money to pay bills or boost spending, meaning it has to cut its own spending or borrow more to make ends meet. Instead, the president has kept spending at high levels and invested the country's money into bitcoin, a volatile asset widely seen as speculative, according to the International Monetary Fund, which acts as lender of last resort to countries facing debt crises.

"The president seems rudderless in terms of economic policy-making, and as a consequence, El Salvador is sleepwalking into a potential sovereign default crisis," said Frank Muci, a fellow at the London School of Economics who does research on El Salvador. "The signal you are sending (by embracing bitcoin) is that you have no idea what the country's priorities are and what to do to get out of the hole."

A spokesman for Mr. Bukele didn't respond to requests for comment on the criticism of his policies.

El Salvador's debt is among the worst performers in emerging markets this year. Its sovereign bond due in 2032 is trading around 40 cents on the dollar, while the bond due in January is trading at less than 80 cents on the dollar with a yield close to 50%, indicating market concerns it may not be repaid.

Early this month, Moody's Investors Service cut El Salvador's debt rating to Caa3, deep into junk territory. It noted an "increased probability of a credit event—restructuring, distressed exchange, or default—with relatively high severity."

El Salvador's Finance Minister Alejandro Zelaya said early this month that the bitcoin bond had been delayed because of the cryptocurrency's drop in value. "For some investors this discourages the bond's purchase," he told reporters.

So far, there are no indications that Mr. Bukele plans to change course. On Monday, he said on Twitter that El Salvador bought 500 bitcoin at an average price of \$30,744. "El Salvador just bought the dip!" he added. Bitcoin traded at \$29,745 on Friday.

Mr. Bukele also posted photos of himself supervising the layout of "Bitcoin City," a mining hub and tax haven for crypto entrepreneurs that is to be developed using funds from the bitcoin bond.

Negotiations with the IMF on a \$1.3 billion aid loan stalled last year because of Mr. Bukele's surprise decision to make bitcoin legal tender and other measures that the U.S. government saw as an effort by Mr. Bukele to cement power by [weakening institutions](#) and the [rule of law](#). As bilateral relations with the U.S. deteriorated, El Salvador lost key political backing at the IMF to secure a bailout.

An IMF official said large fiscal deficits and rising global interest rates are contributing to investor pessimism about El Salvador's capacity to repay its debt. Both sides are still in discussions to reduce the country's budget gap and indebtedness, and minimize risks from the country's adoption of the virtual currency. Early this year, the IMF urged El Salvador to [strip bitcoin of its status as legal tender](#) because of its risks to financial stability.

Any bailout now seems a distant possibility, said Alejandro Werner, director of the Georgetown Americas Institute in Washington, D.C., and a former director of the IMF's Western Hemisphere Department.

“It’s difficult to get support in a relatively short period if you carry out very heterodox public-policy strategies without consulting the international community,” he said.

Some hedge funds that had been willing to help the country refinance its debt also got cold feet when Mr. Bukele began investing in bitcoin and the IMF said it was uncomfortable with the speculative investments, said Phil Torres, a senior portfolio manager at Aegon Asset Management specializing in emerging markets.

“A lot of people said this is bad leadership and said they aren’t going to back these bonds,” he said.

The spokesman for Mr. Bukele also didn’t respond to requests for comment on the bonds.

The use of bitcoin as the national currency in this country of 6.5 million hasn’t taken off, surveys show. After the government spent more than \$200 million rolling out bitcoin ATMs and an e-wallet with \$30 worth of free bitcoin for anyone who signed up, most users took the free virtual currency to buy goods or exchange it for dollars.

“Bitcoin was supposed to save the country from economic stagnation, but instead it’s causing harm because no one really uses it and the government keeps spending money to buy more of it,” said Fernando Mejía, a young graphic designer in San Salvador, the country’s capital. “We are just digging deeper into debt.”

In less than three years, the Bukele administration has taken on more than \$5 billion in debt in a tiny economy of about \$28 billion, pushing public debt up to nearly 86% of gross domestic product. The budget deficit was equal to 5.6% of GDP last year, and is expected to be as big this year, economists say.

Economists say the country could tap loans from regional financial institutions. It can also take some funds from the central bank, where most reserves are deposits from savers, or take cash from a planned overhaul of the pension system.

But increased use of domestic funding could risk the stability of the local banking system and jeopardize the country’s use of the dollar as national currency, Barclays said in a recent note to investors.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/15 Tech market losses signs of a bust?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/may/15/tech-market-boom-bust-stocks">https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/may/15/tech-market-boom-bust-stocks</a>
GIST	<p>Jeff Bezos knew this day was coming. Back in April the Amazon boss <a href="#">warned</a> of an impending market slowdown, tweeting that the epic tech boom experienced during the last two years could not last forever.</p> <p>“Most people dramatically underestimate the remarkableness of this bull run,” he said. “Such things are unstoppable ... until they aren’t.</p> <p>“Markets teach,” Bezos added. “The lessons can be painful.”</p> <p>For years the tech industry has led the stock market with bust-out profits, fueled by a pandemic that moved much of the world online. Now all that has changed, with trillions in market value lost in recent weeks. Once-hot startups are being ditched by investors, and even the tech giants seen as stable investments have faltered.</p> <p>Apple is <a href="#">no longer the most valuable company</a> in the world, after <a href="#">losing</a> \$200bn in market value this week. It joins a number of other tech companies in a slump that began in late 2021, and brought the larger <a href="#">Nasdaq Composite</a> down more than 13% in April – a <a href="#">more than 30% drop</a> from record highs the previous year.</p> <p>Meta <a href="#">lost a record</a> \$230bn in market value in February after a disappointing earnings report in which it revealed its Facebook platform had experienced its first ever user decline. Amazon <a href="#">reported</a> its first loss since 2015 in its most recent earnings report last month. Alphabet revenue <a href="#">fell short</a> in its first-quarter</p>

report. Smaller firms are also struggling, with pandemic success story Peloton [seeing shares](#) plunge 20% this week as demand for indoor exercise equipment fell.

### **Hiring freezes underscore a post-pandemic slowdown**

Twitter [announced](#) in an internal memo on Thursday it was freezing new hires, and Meta [did the same last week](#), citing an expense guidance given in its recent earnings report. Amazon [said](#) in a recent earnings call its warehouses were “overstaffed” and while it is not considering layoffs it is “working to remedy that”.

Startups are seeing similar trends, with layoff tracking site Layoffs.fyi [showing](#) at least 55 tech firms have reported layoffs since the start of 2022 – compared with just 25 in the same time period of 2021.

The hiring slowdown comes even as the broader market experiences employment growth, [adding 431,000 jobs in April](#). The freeze is evidence that the boom in the market came from a confluence of unique factors, and was not a long-term trend, said Investing.com senior analyst Haris Anwar.

“Overall market sentiments are reversing from the very bullish sentiment we’ve seen during the pandemic, during which the companies saw a huge boom in demand. In the post-pandemic world, that demand is now coming to more normalized level,” he said.

As Covid-19 hit in early 2020, companies such as Peloton, Zoom and Netflix boomed as offices shuttered and people spent more time at home. Zoom [saw its value](#) explode more than 500% in one year, but [in recent days](#) has seen stock fall nearly to pre-pandemic lows. Netflix, which [added more](#) than 36 million subscribers during the first year of the pandemic, [has lost](#) more than half of its value since reporting disappointing results on 19 April.

This kind of growth cannot be predicted, nor can it be maintained forever, said Raj Shah, analyst at digital transformation consultancy [Publicis Sapient](#).

“Revenues are down, costs are up, and tech companies are going to do what every other company in this situation would do – cut costs through freezing hiring, get rid of costs like unused real estate, push for higher productivity and re-examine investments,” he said.

“Is this a tech bust? It remains to be seen,” he added.

### **Other factors at play**

Pandemic recovery is not the only component slowing tech companies’ runaway growth, experts say. The war in Ukraine has had an effect on advertising spending and has accelerated supply chain problems already introduced by the pandemic, a difficulty cited in a number of recent earnings calls.

“The war in Ukraine, which is a real tragedy on a humanitarian level, has also had an impact on our business,” Meta’s CEO, Mark Zuckerberg, said in a call with investors accompanying its first-quarter earnings report. “We’ve been blocked in Russia and we decided to stop accepting ads from Russian advertisers globally. We’ve also seen effects on business globally following the start of the war.”

Such headwinds are likely spooking investors, said Brian Wieser, the global president for business intelligence at GroupM, accelerating the slowdown.

“There’s an overwhelming sense of fear and concern a lot of decision makers have around all things economic right now,” he said. “The war certainly catalyzed a lot of it, but inflation and supply chain issues were already a problem.”

US inflation was higher than expected in April, nearing a 30-year high at 8.3%. Inflation broadly impacts consumer spend, which can have a major impact on companies that rely on e-commerce.

Fears that the Federal Reserve will [continue](#) to raise interest rates to the point where the economy will slip into recession is further affecting investor decisions, said Anwar, as many shy away from high-growth tech stocks.

“Markets always thinking in advance,” he said. “Many investors are acting as if a depression is a done deal. Is that going to happen? It’s a big question mark. But it is why we are seeing an exodus from these stocks.”

### **Crypto takes a hit**

The tech slowdown has not been limited to the traditional market. As cryptocurrencies took a major nosedive this week, and Bitcoin fell well below \$30,000 for the first time in nearly a year, wiping more than \$200bn off the broader market, some [declared](#) that “crypto is dead”.

Crypto’s stumble has been attributed, in part, to a recent shake-up in the market when a popular “stablecoin” called TerraUSD collapsed. Stablecoins, [a type of digital currency](#) pegged to the US dollar, are thought to be less volatile than traditional cryptocurrencies.

Its fall has investors spooked that this is perhaps not true, said Tammy Da Costa, Analyst at [DailyFX](#), as evidenced by the collapse of Terra coupled with a dismal earnings report from major crypto exchange Coinbase.

“A major concern is that many retail traders have invested in bitcoin and cryptos in an effort to receive higher returns in a low interest rate environment,” he said. “Now, as price pressures mount and the cost of living continues to soar, fears [have raised] that a systemic shock may occur if large institutions continue to withdraw funds from their crypto portfolios.”

Aside from digital currency blunders, the same market forces influencing big tech companies could also be affecting digital currencies, said Wieser. Although crypto has traditionally been thought of as separate from the market, it cannot escape the war in Ukraine and other major headwinds.

“Higher interest rates make everyone more conscious about investing and the choices they’re making when it comes to momentum driven assets,” he said. “It doesn’t take a lot to send these kinds of markets the other direction.”

### **Not a slump, but a deceleration**

While many are panicking, Wieser is quick to note that it’s not as if these companies are failing – it is that the explosive growth seen over the last two years is not sustainable.

“Deceleration is not the same as decline,” he said. “If you’ve grown 20-30%, and then you are suddenly growing just 10%, it might feel like a significant change. But it’s not a crash.”

While tech companies seem to be slowing hiring patterns, there are not yet indications that mass layoffs are on the horizon for leading companies such as Meta, [Twitter](#), and Amazon – all of whom have all expressed that they have no plans to downsize.

Still, rumors have been roiling that big cuts are on the horizon for smaller firms. “The next 6-8 weeks is going to be a bloodbath,” [tweeted JD Ross](#), co-founder of the music investment platform Royal. “I’m hearing rumors about a ton of companies preparing to lay off 20-40% of their team.”

The slowdown is coming from a confluence of factors affecting companies across the entire market, said Shah of Publicis Sapient: inflation, the war in Ukraine, supply chain woes, and changing consumer behaviors. Big tech companies will probably remain “safe harbors” – long woven into our digital lives and more likely to weather the storm of the market. But how the larger industry will be altered remains to be seen.

“Tech shares are in for a bumpy ride,” he said.



## Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	05/16 Most lethal threat: racist, extremist violence
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2022/05/15/buffalo-shooting-domestic-threat-extremist-violence/9785884002/">https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2022/05/15/buffalo-shooting-domestic-threat-extremist-violence/9785884002/</a>
GIST	<p>The details emerging from America's latest mass shooting were as stunning as they were familiar. A lone gunman, allegedly driven by long-simmering racial animus, opened fire at a grocery store in Buffalo, New York, with the apparent purpose of taking Black lives.</p> <p>The 18-year-old, white suspect, dressed in body armor and armed with a rifle, <a href="#">killed 10 and wounded three</a>, police say.</p> <p>It is a grim scenario that has rattled federal, state and local law enforcement officials for years as racially motivated extremists have taken lives in Charleston, South Carolina; El Paso, Texas; Pittsburgh; Charlottesville, Virginia; and now Buffalo, New York.</p> <p>FBI Director Christopher Wray, in testimony last year before a Senate committee, offered perhaps the most daunting assessment of an increasingly toxic threat, saying racially motivated attackers represented the most deadly and "biggest chunk" of an estimated 2,000 open domestic terror investigations.</p> <p>Brian Levin, director of the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino, called the surge in hate crimes targeting Blacks, Asians, Jews and others as "a fire season all year long."</p> <p>An examination of hate crimes in major U.S. cities tracked by Levin's group and set to be published this year found a nearly 39% increase in such offenses from 2020 to 2021.</p> <p>"Nearly every social science data marker is flashing an undeniable warning sign," Levin said of the volatile environment.</p> <p>Though warnings have sounded for years, the Capitol attack on Jan. 6, 2021, pushed law enforcement to confront dangerous social and political divisions that have widened for the past decade.</p> <p>The Biden administration, prompted by the Capitol insurrection, unveiled its National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism last year, based on the government's assessment of the threat landscape.</p> <p>"The two most lethal elements of today's domestic terrorism threat are ... racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists who advocate for the superiority of the white race and antigovernmental or anti-authority violent extremists, such as militia violent extremists," the administration concluded last year.</p> <p>The attack Saturday in Buffalo appeared to affirm the government's ugly assessment.</p> <p>Authorities, who continue to examine an alleged racially charged manifesto, were quick to describe the assault as a hate crime.</p> <p>On Saturday, the Erie County, New York, District Attorney's Office filed murder charges against accused shooter Payton Gendron. Officials said they will weigh additional charges in the coming days.</p> <p>Describing the assault as "horrific," Attorney General Merrick Garland said federal authorities were investigating the case as a hate crime and an act of racially motivated violent extremism.</p> <p>The descriptions varied only in the degree of evil.</p>

U.S. Rep. Brian Higgins, D-N.Y., a Buffalo native, said the evidence gathered points to an “explicit act of racially motivated violence.” Citing briefings with law enforcement officials, Higgins said the suspect carried an assault weapon inscribed with a racial epithet.

“I was on site for the last three hours, and I listened carefully to what the FBI, police, the district attorney and the U.S. attorney had to say,” Higgins told USA TODAY. “There is no doubt this was a racially motivated attack.”

Higgins said authorities were reviewing the contents of the graphic manifesto that referenced other racially motivated attackers, including an avowed white supremacist who killed nine people in 2015 at a Black church in Charleston, South Carolina. Federal agents worked Sunday to confirm the authenticity of the 180-page manifesto that was posted online.

“This is what all the anecdotal evidence adds up to,” Higgins said.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/15 Shooting reflects law enforcement fears</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/buffalo-supermarket-shooting-reflects-law-enforcements-fears/story?id=84730653">https://abcnews.go.com/US/buffalo-supermarket-shooting-reflects-law-enforcements-fears/story?id=84730653</a>
GIST	<p>Law enforcement officials say the Buffalo, New York, supermarket shooting has underscored their long-held fear that someone could be radicalized online, have access to guns, take inspiration from prior attacks and then carry out an act of murderous violence against a soft target, like a grocery store.</p> <p><a href="#">Ten people -- all of whom were Black -- were killed</a> in Saturday's mass shooting in Buffalo in a rampage authorities are calling a "racially-motivated hate crime."</p> <p>The 180-page document believed to have been written by the Buffalo suspect, 18-year-old Payton Gendron, includes praise for the <a href="#">2015 mass shooting</a> at a Charleston, South Carolina, church where nine Black parishioners were gunned down.</p> <p>Evidence points to the Buffalo shooting being a calculated, racially-motivated execution by a teenager who appeared to have been targeting Black people, according to multiple sources and a review of FBI cases and testimony. The hate-filled document apparently written by Gendron includes the radical notion that white people are being replaced in the U.S.</p> <p>The teen gunman allegedly wanted a race war and livestreamed the attack in an apparent effort to spur others to kill minorities, sources said.</p> <p>Law enforcement has had mounting concerns about so-called lone wolf killers -- and white supremacists have been chief among them, sources said.</p> <p>The FBI has warned that this trend has been increasing in violence: the 2015 Charleston church massacre targeting Black parishioners claimed nine lives; the <a href="#">2018 mass shooting at a Pittsburgh synagogue killed 11 people</a>; and the 2019 <a href="#">mass shooting at an El Paso Walmart</a>, targeting Hispanics, took 23 lives.</p> <p>According to the FBI, domestic extremists -- many of them racially motivated -- have killed more people in the U.S. than any other group since 9/11, including internationally-inspired terrorists.</p> <p>"Over the last several years the U.S. has experienced a sustained level of violence by individuals who self-connect with extremist causes -- primarily through the consumption of online content -- and who, independent of a terrorist or extremist organization, will go out and engage in mass casualty, violent attacks," said ABC News contributor John Cohen, a former top official in the Department of Homeland Security.</p> <p>Cohen noted several conditions that have converged to create this dangerous environment: the polarization of discourse in the U.S. where some people view those who disagree with them as the enemy; public</p>

figures mimicking violent extremists' words; and an online ecosystem "saturated with conspiracy theories and other information" published with "the intention of sowing discord and inspiring violence."

"Those are the conditions that have all come together to make ... the most volatile, complex and dynamic threat environment I've experienced in 38 years," Cohen warned. "It's those dynamics that have law enforcement very concerned that this is a trend that not only will continue, but get worse."

There's also the pandemic factor. A bulletin from Orange County, California, authorities last year highlighted the impressionable nature of young people who've been largely isolated during the pandemic and are "radicalized online by racially motivated violent extremist propaganda."

In Gendron's document, he claimed he settled on his beliefs through what he found on the internet and that there was little to no influence on his beliefs by people he knew in person. The person Gendron said radicalized him the most was the gunman who attacked [two mosques in New Zealand in 2019, killing 51 people](#).

Gendron has been arraigned on one count of first-degree murder and is due back in court on May 19. As the investigation continues, Sunday worshippers at predominantly Black churches in New York City can expect to see additional police patrols. The shooting caused police to move resources to Black churches "to provide a visible presence in the event of any copycat but moreover to provide an air of protection and safety who go to the larger houses of worship," the NYPD said.

The NYPD said there is no known threat to New York and described the shift of resources as a precaution.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/15 US to remove 5 groups terrorism blacklist</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory/us-set-remove-groups-foreign-terrorism-blacklist-84731677">https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory/us-set-remove-groups-foreign-terrorism-blacklist-84731677</a>
GIST	<p>BERLIN -- The United States is poised to remove five extremist groups, all believed to be defunct, from its list of foreign terrorist organizations, including several that once posed significant threats, killing hundreds if not thousands of people across Asia, Europe and the Middle East.</p> <p>Although the groups are inactive, the decision is politically sensitive for the Biden administration and the countries in which the organizations operated, and could draw criticism from victims and their families still dealing with the losses of loved ones.</p> <p>The organizations are the Basque separatist group ETA , the Japanese cult Aum Shinrikyo, the radical Jewish group Kahane Kach and two Islamic groups that have been active in Israel, the Palestinian territories and Egypt.</p> <p>The U.S. State Department notified Congress on Friday of the moves, which come at the same time as an increasingly divisive but unrelated debate in Washington and elsewhere about whether Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard should or can be legally removed from the U.S. list as part of efforts to salvage the languishing Iran nuclear deal.</p> <p>That designation, which was imposed by the Trump administration, was not mentioned in Friday's notifications.</p> <p>In separate notices to lawmakers, the State Department said the terrorism designations for the five groups will be formally removed when the determinations are published in the Federal Register, which is expected this coming week.</p> <p>Copies of the notifications, all of which were signed by U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Wednesday, were obtained by The Associated Press.</p> <p>The general reason for the removals is identical in each of the cases: Blinken asserting that they were based on an administrative review of the designations, which by law is required every five years.</p>

“Revoking FTO designations ensures our terrorism sanctions remain current and credible and does not reflect any change in policy towards the past activities of any of these the organizations,” the State Department said on Sunday.

The reviews take into account whether designated groups are still active, whether they have committed terrorist acts within the previous five years and whether removal from or retention of the list would be in U.S. national security interests. Under the law that created the list, the secretary of state can remove groups that he or she deems no longer to fit the criteria.

“Based on a review of the Administrative Record assembled in this matter and in consultation with the Attorney General and the Secretary of the Treasury, I determine that the circumstances that were the basis for the designation ... have changed in such a manner to warrant revocation of the designation,” Blinken wrote in each notice.

Removing the groups from the list has the immediate effect of rescinding a range of sanctions that the designations had entailed. Those include asset freezes and travel bans as well as a prohibition on any Americans providing the groups or their members with any material support. In the past the material support provision has been broadly defined to encompass money or in-kind assistance, in some cases even medical care.

All but one of the five groups was first designated a foreign terrorist organization in 1997 and have remained on the list for the past 25 years.

U.S. officials familiar with the matter said the decisions were made only after consulting lawmakers several months ago about whether the latest five-year reviews should proceed. Before now, only 15 groups have been removed from the list.

The specific reasons for each the removals are included only in classified sections that accompanied the notifications, which are not classified on their own. These sections are labeled “SECRET/NOFORN,” which means their contents can only be shared among U.S. officials with proper clearances and not with foreign governments.

The groups to be removed are:

— Aum Shinrikyo (AUM), the Japanese “Supreme Truth” cult that carried out the deadly sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway in 1995 that killed 13 people and sickened hundreds more. The group has been considered largely defunct since the executions of its top echelons, including leader Shoko Asahara, in 2018. It was designated a foreign terrorist organization in 1997.

— Basque Fatherland and Liberty, or ETA, which ran a separatist campaign of bombings and assassinations in northern Spain and elsewhere for decades that killed more than 800 people and wounded thousands more, until declaring a cease-fire in 2010 and disbanding after the arrests and trials of its last leaders in 2018. It was designated a foreign terrorist organization in 1997.

— Kahane Chai, or Kach. The radical Orthodox Jewish group was founded by ultranationalist Israeli Rabbi Meir Kahane in 1971. He led the group until his assassination in 1990. Members of the group have killed, attacked or otherwise threatened or harassed Arabs, Palestinians and Israeli government officials, but the organization has been dormant since 2005. The group was first designated in 1997.

— The Mujahidin Shura Council in the Environs of Jerusalem, an umbrella group of several jihadist organizations based in Gaza that has claimed responsibility for numerous rocket and other attacks on Israel since its founding in 2012. The council was first designated in 2014.

— Gama’a al-Islamiyya, or Islamic Group—IG, an Egyptian Sunni Islamist movement that fought to topple Egypt’s government during the 1990s. It conducted hundreds of deadly attacks against the police and security forces as well as tourists. The group was first designated in 1997.

	<p>The State Department said on Sunday that Blinken was required by law to revoke the designations if the groups no longer met the legal criteria.</p> <p>Speaking of the Kahane Chai group, the department said it had not been linked to a terrorist attack since 2005. It also said the Mujahidin Shura Council has not claimed an attack since 2013.</p> <p>“Neither currently meet the statutory definition of a foreign organization,” the department said.</p> <p>It added that both groups would remain on the U.S. list of Specially Designated Global Terrorist entities that will keep in place sanctions against their property and assets in American jurisdictions.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>05/16 Mali pulls out regional anti-extremist force</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://english.alarabiya.net/News/world/2022/05/16/Mali-withdraws-from-regional-anti-extremist-force">https://english.alarabiya.net/News/world/2022/05/16/Mali-withdraws-from-regional-anti-extremist-force</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>Mali said Sunday it was withdrawing from a west African force fighting extremists to protest its being rejected as head of the G5 regional group, which also includes Mauritania, Chad, Burkina and Niger.</p> <p>“The government of Mali is deciding to withdraw from all the organs and bodies of the G5 Sahel, including the joint force” fighting the extremists, it said in a statement.</p> <p>The G5 Sahel was created in 2014 and its anti-extremist force launched in 2017.</p> <p>A conference of heads of state of the G5 Sahel scheduled for February 2022 in Bamako had been due to mark “the start of the Malian presidency of the G5”.</p> <p>But nearly four months after the mandate indicated this meeting “has still not taken place”, the statement said.</p> <p>Bamako “firmly rejects the argument of a G5 member state which advances the internal national political situation to reject Mali's exercising the G5 Sahel presidency”, the statement said, without naming the country.</p> <p>The Mali government said “the opposition of some G5 Sahel member states to Mali's presidency is linked to manoeuvres by a state outside the region aiming desperately to isolate Mali”, without naming that country.</p> <p>Mali has been since January 9 the target of a series of economic and diplomatic sanctions from west African states to punish the military junta's bid to stay in power for several more years, following coups in August 2020 and May 2021.</p> <p>The junta has opted for a two-year transition while the Economic Community of West African States has urged Bamako to organise elections in 16 months maximum.</p> <p>Beyond Mali and Burkina, the G5 Sahel, composed of around 5,000 troops, includes Mauritania, Chad and Niger.</p> <p>The military coups in Mali and Burkina Faso are undermining the regional force's operational capacity, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said in a report to Security Council on May 11.</p> <p>“I am deeply concerned by the rapidly deteriorating security situation in the Sahel, as well as by the potentially debilitating effect the uncertain political situation in Mali, Burkina Faso and beyond will have on efforts to further operationalise the G5-Sahel Joint Force,” Guterres' report said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/15 Somalia election; terrorists hold true power
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/15/world/africa/somalia-election-president.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/15/world/africa/somalia-election-president.html</a>
GIST	<p>MOGADISHU, Somalia — Every month, Abdow Omar, who runs a business importing flour and sugar, gets a call from the Somali militant group Al Shabab reminding him that it’s time to pay them taxes — or risk losing his business, or even his life.</p> <p>After more than 16 years, the Shabab, terrorists linked to Al Qaeda, now have a firm grip on much of Somalia — extorting taxes, judging court cases, forcibly recruiting minors into its forces and carrying out suicide bombings.</p> <p>The country is about to get its next leader on Sunday in an election that has been delayed for almost two years. No less than 38 candidates, including one woman, registered to vie and unseat the incumbent president. But many residents, <a href="#">observing the government's infighting and paralysis</a>, are asking whether a new administration will make a difference at all.</p> <p>“While the government is busy with itself, we are suffering,” Mr. Omar said. “The Shabab are like a mafia group. You either have to obey them or close your business. There’s no freedom.”</p> <p>Somalia, a nation of 16 million people strategically located in the Horn of Africa, has suffered for decades from civil war, weak governance and terrorism. Its central government has been bolstered by African Union peacekeepers and Western aid, including billions of dollars in humanitarian aid and security assistance from the United States, which sought to keep the country from becoming a safe haven for international terrorism.</p> <p>Now, inflation is climbing, and food prices are sharply on the rise because of a biting drought and the loss of wheat imports from Ukraine.</p> <p>The country doesn’t have a one-person, one-vote electoral system. Instead, more than 325 lawmakers, who were chosen by clan representatives, will select the next president.</p> <p>The candidates, who include former presidents and prime ministers, are looking to unseat the current president, Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, who has served for five years. Critics accused Mr. Mohamed — <a href="#">a former U.S. citizen and bureaucrat</a> — of trying to <a href="#">illegally stay in power</a>, cracking down on the opposition and journalists, <a href="#">fomenting a rift with neighboring Kenya</a> and undercutting the power-sharing model that buttressed the country’s federal system.</p> <p>Al Shabab exploited the political instability, and the <a href="#">bitter divisions among security forces</a>, to <a href="#">grow their tentacles</a>. In the weeks and months before the vote, the group killed civilians including at beachside restaurants, mounted a major offensive on an African Union base — killing at least 10 peacekeepers from Burundi — and dispatched suicide bombers to jump on the cars of government officials.</p> <p>In interviews with more than two dozen Somali citizens, lawmakers, analysts, diplomats and aid workers before Sunday’s vote, many expressed concern at how the deteriorating political, security and humanitarian situation had reversed the few years of stability the nation achieved after Al Shabab were kicked out of the capital in 2011.</p> <p>“These were five lost years, ones in which we lost the cohesion of the country,” said Hussein Sheikh-Ali, a former national security adviser to President Mohamed and the chairman of the Hiraal Institute, a research center in Mogadishu.</p> <p>The protracted political battles, particularly over the elections, undermined the government’s ability to deliver key services, observers say. Critics and opposition figures have accused President Mohamed of trying to cling to power at all costs, exerting pressure on the electoral commission, installing leaders in regional states who would help sway the election and trying to fill the Parliament with his own supporters. Last year, when he <a href="#">signed a law</a> extending his tenure by two years, <a href="#">fighting broke out in the capital</a>’s streets, forcing him to change course.</p>



As the election of lawmakers got underway, observers said it was rife with corruption and irregularities.

Abdi Ismail Samatar, a first time senator who is also a professor at the University of Minnesota who researches democracy in Africa, said this election could be ranked as “the worst” in Somalia’s history.

“I don’t think I could have ever imagined how corrupt and self-serving it is,” Mr. Samatar said. While no one attempted to bribe him, he said, “I saw people being given money in the election for the speakership right in front of my face in the hallway.”

Larry E. André Jr., the U.S. ambassador to Somalia, said that the majority of the seats had been selected by regional leaders, “sold” or “auctioned,” and that the messy election had pushed the country to the “cliff’s edge.”

The United States imposed visa sanctions in both February and March on Somali officials and others accused of undermining the parliamentary elections. The parliamentary vote finally concluded in late April, producing new speakers and deputy speakers mostly aligned with groups opposed to President Mohamed.

Because of the indirect nature of the vote, presidential candidates in Mogadishu aren’t shaking hands with citizens or campaigning in the streets. Instead, they are meeting with lawmakers and clan elders in glitzy hotels and compounds guarded by dozens of soldiers and blast walls. Some aspirants have put up election billboards along major roads in the capital, promising good governance, justice and peace.

But few in this seaside city believe they would make good on their pledges.

“Everyone wears a suit, carries a briefcase and promises to be as sweet as honey,” said Jamila Adan, a political science student at City University. “But we don’t believe them.”

Her friend Anisa Abdullahi, a business major, agreed, saying those running for office cannot identify with the daily tribulations facing ordinary Somalis. Security forces, she said, frequently block roads unannounced to create safe corridors for politicians, making it impossible for her and many others to get to class, do business or visit relatives.

“They never make people feel like the government comes from the people and is supposed to serve the people,” she said.

Some Somalis have now turned to the Shabab to get services that would normally be delivered by a functioning state. Many in Mogadishu regularly travel to areas dozens of miles north of the city to get their cases heard at Shabab-operated mobile courts.

One of them is Ali Ahmed, a businessman from a minority tribe whose family home in Mogadishu was occupied for years by members of a powerful tribe. After he presented his case to a Shabab-run court, he said, two weeks later the court ruled that the occupiers should vacate his house — and they did.

“It’s sad, but no one goes to the government to get justice,” he said. “Even government judges will secretly advise you to go to Al Shabab.”

Some officials admit the government’s own shortcomings. Al Shabab have been able to widen their tax base because “elected officials were too busy politicking instead of doing policy work,” said one government official who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of lack of authorization to speak to the media.

The election comes as parts of Somalia face the worst drought in four decades. Some six million people, or about 40 percent of the population, are facing extreme food shortages, according to the World Food Program, with nearly 760,000 people displaced.

Many of those impacted by the drought live in Shabab-controlled areas in south-central Somalia, where aid organizations are not able to reach them, crops are failing and the Shabab demand taxes on livestock, according to interviews with officials and displaced people. The United Nations estimates that almost 900,000 people reside in inaccessible areas administered by Al Shabab.

To find food and water, families travel hundreds of miles, sometimes on foot, to cities and towns like Mogadishu, and Doolow in the southern Gedo region. Some parents said they buried their children on the way while others left weak children behind in order to save other offspring.

Mohammed Ali Hussein, the deputy governor of Gedo, said the lack of security prevented officials from rescuing people in Shabab-dominated areas even when family members pinpoint an exact location.

Dealing with the threat of the Shabab will be among the first challenges facing Somalia's next government, said Afyare Abdi Elmi, executive director of the Heritage Institute for Policy Studies in Mogadishu.

But the next leader, he said, needs also to deliver a new constitution, reform the economy, deal with climate change, open dialogue with the breakaway region of Somaliland and unite a polarized nation.

"Governance in Somalia became too confrontational over the past few years. It was like pulling teeth," Mr. Elmi said. "People are now ready for a new dawn."

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HEADLINE	<b>05/14 More declassified FBI documents on 9/11</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.floridabulldog.org/2022/03/more-declassified-fbi-documents-to-be-made-public-soon/">https://www.floridabulldog.org/2022/03/more-declassified-fbi-documents-to-be-made-public-soon/</a>
GIST	<p>The Justice Department has notified a federal judge in New York that within days it expects to release another 1,000 pages of declassified FBI documents about Operation Encore, the bureau's sub rosa investigation of possible Saudi government complicity in 9/11.</p> <p>The release of those records will be in response to President Biden's September executive order mandating a sweeping declassification review of "certain documents concerning the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001." To date, more than 700 FBI documents have been released totaling more than 2,700 pages.</p> <p>Biden's order effectively overturned a 2020 decision by Trump administration Attorney General William Barr to invoke the rarely used state secrets privilege to keep records about Operation Encore hidden from the public.</p> <p>Thursday's notification letter to U.S. Magistrate Judge Sarah Netburn from the New York U.S. Attorney who is overseeing the government's participation in the extensive civil lawsuit brought against Saudi Arabia by 9/11 victims also states, "It is anticipated that there may be further releases of information into mid-April, due to continuing coordination with a number of foreign governments and ongoing interagency review."</p> <p>In addition, because records produced publicly will contain redactions required by the Privacy Act, the FBI will create separate sets of documents that remove those redactions for use by lawyers for the 9/11 families and victims.</p> <p><b>FBI DOCUMENTS FROM GRAND JURY</b></p> <p>Expected to be included in the coming releases are "passages containing analysis of telephone, banking, financial, credit and communication records" obtained via a grand jury subpoena. Earlier this month, Netburn granted a government request to make public those grand jury materials.</p> <p>A grand jury in New York was part of the Encore investigation that focused on what agents believed was a support network for two 9/11 hijackers, Nawaf al-Hazmi and Khalid al-Mihdhar.</p>

Hazmi and Mihdhar were part of a five-member al Qaeda team that on 9/11/01 hijacked American Airlines Flight 77 after leaving Dulles International Airport and crashed it into the Pentagon, killing 59 passengers and crew, and another 125 people in the building.

Declassified Operation Encore documents previously released included significant new information about a trio of Saudi Ministry of Islamic Affairs officials operating inside the U.S. who are suspected of aiding Hazmi and Mihdhar. One of those figures was Mutaib al Sudairy.

A 2010 FBI document says that in Columbus, MO, Sudairy lived “with Ziyad Khaleel for about four months in 2000, Khaleel was a known key communications equipment procurement officer for UBL [Usama bin Laden] and provided satellite phones used in the 1998 US embassy bombings in Africa.” A 2016 FBI report says Khaleel likewise “managed wire transfers from IARA [Islamic American Relief Agency] to bank accounts controlled by UBL.” It also noted that Sudairy’s phone number was found in the address book of suspected Saudi intelligence agent Omar al Bayoumi after 9/11. Bayoumi was one of a trio of Saudis at the center of the Encore investigation for providing critical assistance to Hazmi and Mihdhar shortly after their arrival in the U.S. in January 2000.

#### BACK TO FLORIDA

The appearance of Khaleel in the FBI’s narrative brings the 9/11 case back once again to Florida. The reason: another of his former roommates, Muneer K. Arafat, was an imam from 2000-2003 at a Sarasota-area mosque run by the Islamic Society of Sarasota/Bradenton. He also later served as imam at the Boca Raton Islamic Center.

Arafat gained notoriety in June 2005 when he testified as a government witness at the high-profile terrorism trial of University of South Florida professor Sami Al-Arian. Arafat, who admitted being paid \$35,000 by the U.S., claimed Al-Arian tried to recruit him in 1988 into joining a faction of Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

According to a Dec. 8, 2003 Florida Department of Law Enforcement report obtained by Florida Bulldog, a source told FDLE and FBI agents, “Arafat was a member of the Islamic Brotherhood, who follows a radical belief...and wishes harm to the United States.”

That same year, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported that Arafat testified about his involvement with Khaleel, who also went by the name Ziyad Sadaqa, before a federal grand jury in December 2002. Arafat, a Kuwaiti of Palestinian descent, was transported from Sarasota to St. Louis to testify following his November 2002 arrest for overstaying his visa, the paper said.

Khaleel/Sadaqa died in a car accident in Saudi Arabia in 2002.

In an interview with the Post-Dispatch, Arafat said he and Khaleel raised \$20,000 in 2000 for the Holy Land Relief Foundation. In 2001, the U.S. designated the Holy Land group a terrorist organization, and claimed that its leaders were members of Hamas, the militant Islamic group. The foundation is now defunct.

“Arafat said he opposed terrorism and had no reason to believe that the money that Sadaqa sent to the Holy Land Relief Foundation went for anything other than orphans and medical care,” the newspaper wrote.

#### AN IMAM’S CONNECTIONS

Arafat’s name and phone numbers were also found in the cell phone address book of Wissam Hammoud following Hammoud’s January 2004 arrest in Sarasota for weapons violations and attempting to kill a federal agent and witness. Hammoud pleaded guilty a year later and was sentenced to 21 years in prison. The U.S. Bureau of Prisons, which has classified Hammoud as an “international terrorist associate,” lists Hammoud as due for early release in September.

Sarasota private detective Bill Warner has tracked Arafat, 57, for years – ever since Warner’s involvement with U.S. Immigration and Customs (ICE) agents and the Sarasota Police Department as a confidential informant in a terrorism investigation that began in June 2002.

“My involvement consisted of supplying surveillance photos, background checks and cell phone records,” Warner said. “I obtained the cell phone records of at least 24 individuals, and phone numbers of who they called, linked to the Islamic Society of Sarasota and Bradenton, various used car lot owners in Tampa and Sarasota and Imam Muneer Arafat.

“The FBI office in Sarasota was aware of my activity as the local Sarasota Police Department reported directly to them any information I supplied. ICE investigation became a hot issue as it linked to terrorism and was taken over by the FBI in 2003,” Warner said.

“Imam Muneer Arafat in my opinion and from my experience was a double agent. He worked for (the) FBI as a paid confidential informant from 2002-2003, wearing a wire in support of terrorism investigation in Sarasota Fl. and was part of the advance team in early 2000 for 9/11 hijack pilots Mohamed Atta, Marwan al-Shehhi and Ziad Jarrah also in Sarasota County,” Warner said.

Arafat is believed to have been deported in 2007. He is now living in Amman, Jordan

They trained at nearby Venice Municipal Airport. Atta and Shehhi were at the controls of the two passenger jets that struck the World Trade Center. Jarrah led the al Qaeda team that took over United Airlines Flight 93 and crashed it into a Pennsylvania field after passengers fought back.

#### SARASOTA CONNECTIONS

According to a 15-page FDLE report from April 2004, Hammoud also told authorities that while Arafat was the spiritual leader of the Islamic Society of Sarasota and Bradenton in 2000 and 2001 he played soccer on its property with Abdulaziz al-Hijji.

Al-Hijji “brought with him a friend to the soccer games. Hammoud advised that this friend was Adnan el Shukrijumah,” the report says.

Shukrijumah, a former Miramar resident, later became a suspected al Qaeda leader. The U.S. had a \$5 million bounty on his head until he was killed by Pakistani troops in December 2014.

Florida Bulldog, working with Irish author Anthony Summers in 2011, reported that Atta and other 9/11 figures spent time at the Sarasota-area home of Abdulaziz and Anoud al-Hijji, a Saudi couple with ties to the royal family who two weeks before the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington abruptly quit their home – leaving behind cars, clothes, jewelry and food in the refrigerator.

FBI records later obtained by Florida Bulldog during Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) litigation state that agents found “many connections” between the Sarasota Saudis and “individuals associated with the terrorist attacks on 9/11/2001.”

A second FOIA lawsuit filed by the Bulldog against the FBI in 2016 uncovered the existence of Operation Encore, which later became both a central focus of the New York lawsuit against Saudi Arabia and President Biden’s September executive order.

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HEADLINE	05/14 DHS: \$1.6B grants to fight terrorism
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.ntd.com/dhs-announces-1-6-billion-in-grants-to-fight-terrorism-bolster-election-security-779526.html">https://www.ntd.com/dhs-announces-1-6-billion-in-grants-to-fight-terrorism-bolster-election-security-779526.html</a>
GIST	The Department of Homeland Security ( <a href="#">DHS</a> ) has announced \$1.6 billion in grants to help state and local officials prepare for and respond to a range of hazards, including acts of terrorism and threats to election security.

The funding will be distributed among eight so-called “preparedness grant programs” in fiscal year 2022, across six priority areas, including cybersecurity, soft targets and crowded places, intelligence and information sharing, and domestic violent extremism.

The threat landscape facing the nation has evolved since the DHS was established nearly two decades ago, Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas [said in a statement](#).

“As the threats to our nation continue to evolve, our grant programs must evolve with them,” Mayorkas said, noting that two new priority areas have been designated this year for the State Homeland Security Program (SHSP) and Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) grant programs: community preparedness and resilience, and election security.

The state homeland program will receive \$415 million and the urban area program will be given \$615 million, with specific allocations based on statutory minimums and an assessment of relative risk.

For both the state homeland and urban area grants, 30 percent of the [funds](#) must be designated for law enforcement activities meant to prevent acts of terrorism. Another 30 percent must address the six priority areas, including election security.

Election security concerns have featured more prominently on the DHS agenda in recent times, with the agency [announcing it](#) was establishing the Disinformation Governance Board, partly to fight against election interference.

Critics have derided the board as a threat to free speech. Sen. Josh Hawley (R-Mo.) called the Disinformation Governance Board a “monstrosity” and said he initially thought it was “satire.” Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) called it “Orwellian,” while Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis claimed it would be used as a cudgel against political opponents.

Mayorkas [has dismissed](#) concerns about the operation of the Disinformation Governance Board, insisting its work will not infringe on free speech, civil liberties, or civil rights.

“It’s not about speech, it’s about the connectivity to violence. That is what we need to address. You know, an individual has the free speech right to spew anti-Semitic rhetoric. What they don’t have the right to do is take hostages in a synagogue, and that’s where we get involved,” Mayorkas said in a recent interview with [Fox News](#).

In his remarks on the announcement of the new \$1.6 billion in preparedness grants, Mayorkas referred to the synagogue hostage situation in Colleyville, Texas, as a factor that drove a request for additional funds for the Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP).

“This program provides essential resources to help protect nonprofit organizations at risk of terrorist attacks,” he said, adding that this year, Congress will provide a total of \$250 million for the program, an increase of \$70 million from last year.

Mayorkas added that, under next year’s budget request to Congress, President Joe Biden will request an additional \$110 million for the nonprofit security grant program.

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HEADLINE	05/15 FBI report: Saudi support to 9/11 hijackers
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.floridabulldog.org/2022/05/fbi-report-says-saudi-government-officials-provided-support-network-for-9-11-hijackers/">https://www.floridabulldog.org/2022/05/fbi-report-says-saudi-government-officials-provided-support-network-for-9-11-hijackers/</a>
GIST	A 130-page FBI report written only last July lays out the numerous connections of U.S.-based “personnel and entities controlled by the Saudi Arabian government” to the al Qaeda terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

It's the first time since the public learned of the existence of a secret investigation into the Saudis' role in 9/11 – code-named Operation Encore – that the Justice Department has declassified records previously declared to be “state secrets” that say Saudi government officials knowingly provided a support network for the first two al Qaeda hijackers to enter the U.S.

The new report lays out what it calls the FBI's “investigations and supporting documentation” regarding the religious “militant network that was created, funded directed and supported by the KSA [Kingdom of Saudi Arabia] and its affiliated organizations and diplomatic personnel within the U.S.”

That network, as described in the report, was intertwined with the hijackers.

“As Saudi government officials and intelligence officers were directly operating and supporting the entities involved with this network, their involvement with the activities of these organizations/individuals would logically be supposed to have the knowledge or concurrence of the KSA government. This knowledge and/or concurrence by the SAG [Saudi Arabian Government] is related to the 9/11 investigation not only [by] the direct involvement of some personnel but also via the creation of a larger network for such activities.”

The FBI report, dated July 23, 2021, was written and approved by FBI officials whose names are redacted. It states that it consolidates and highlights the findings of two decades of investigation now “deemed essential for future case agents of this program to understand the origin of the investigation.”

### **OPERATION ENCORE**

The report is among thousands of pages of formerly secret documents about Operation Encore ordered reviewed, declassified and released by [President Biden](#) starting last September to “maximize transparency.” Encore was the FBI's follow-up to its original 9/11 investigation, code-named PENTTBOM, and examined the Saudi role in 9/11. Encore's existence was first reported by [Florida Bulldog](#) in late 2016.

The FBI refers repeatedly in the report to the existence of U.S.-based Saudi “support networks” for the 9/11 hijackers. Previously, the FBI had not acknowledged that such networks were found.

The new report goes on to provide an updated “analysis” about “the ties of some of these entities to Saudi Arabian intelligence services, noting that much information has come to light since the 9/11 Commission published its report in 2004.

Much of the report zeros in on the apparently nefarious roles of a pair of religious offices operating within the Washington, D.C. Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia – the Islamic Affairs Department and the Office of Da'wa (or Propagation).

“Investigation of the 9/11 hijackers and their support networks identified significant connections to these offices either directly or via the Saudi Arabian Consulate in Los Angeles,” the report says.

### **FBI REPORT NAMES PRINCE BANDAR**

The report also names Prince Bandar, then Saudi Arabia's ambassador to the U.S., and the Saudi Embassy as being involved with the funding “of a multitude of Islamic organizations, imams and other religious figures within the U.S. – many of which were involved with militant ideology.

“Several of these were known to be tied directly to Prince Bandar. As the propagation of militant ideology would naturally provide justification for those who were in the hijacker's support network, these organizations will also be listed below.”

Those passages, coupled with the report's other details, seriously undermine what now appear to be outdated 9/11 Commission statements long cited by Saudi Arabia to bolster its contention that it had nothing to do with the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington.



The Commission's final report concluded it had found "no evidence that the Saudi government as an institution or senior Saudi officials individually funded" al Qaeda. Further, "Commission staff found no evidence that the Saudi government as an institution or as individual senior officials knowingly support or supported al Qaeda."

At the same time, however, the commission also stated, "The intelligence community identified [Saudi Arabia] as the primary source of money for al Qaeda both before and after the September 11 attacks." A 2013 report by the [European Parliament](#) on Saudi Arabia's support for religious extremism around the world noted, "It has been estimated that Saudi Arabia has invested more than \$10 billion to promote its Wahhabi agenda through charitable foundations."

A sizeable slice of those funds was allegedly siphoned off by al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations like Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and the Haqqani network. "Al Qaeda and JI's operatives were then diverting about 15-20 percent of the funds to finance their operations," the 2013 report says.

Wahhabism is Saudi Arabia's dominant faith, a fundamentalist sect of Sunni Islam akin to puritanical Salafism.

### **THUMAIRY, BAYOUMI AND JARRAH**

A 2012 FBI status report on Encore released to *Florida Bulldog* in 2016 amid Freedom of Information litigation identifies a trio of Saudis "known to have provided substantial assistance to 9/11 hijackers Nawaf al Hazmi and Khalid al Mihdhar" after they arrived in Los Angeles in January 2000. Hazmi and Mihdhar were among the five al Qaeda hijackers that seized control of American Airlines Flight 77 after leaving Washington Dulles International Airport and crashed it into the Pentagon. Some 125 people in the building and 59 passengers and crew were killed.

The names Fahad al Thumairy and Omar al Bayoumi had previously been public. Musaed al Jarrah's name, originally redacted when the report was first released, was new.

Jarrah, then the Saudi Embassy's director of Islamic Affairs, was said in the 2012 report to have "tasked" Thumairy – a diplomat at the Los Angeles consulate and imam at the nearby King Fahd mosque – and Bayoumi, a suspected Saudi spy, with aiding the future hijackers.

The 2021 report affirmatively identifies Jarrah for the first time as also working for Saudi Arabia's primary intelligence agency, the General Intelligence Presidency (GIP). A heavily redacted section of the report states that as early as 2001 the embassy's Islamic Affairs section was one of the largest spy operations in the world with approximately 50 officers.

"The above information helps verify the involvement of the GIP within the MIA [Ministry of Islamic Affairs] offices," the report says. "This is significant considering the MIA/Dawa office's involvement, and al Jarrah's in particular, with the support network of the 9/11 hijackers as well as with the creation, funding, direction and support of the extensive Salafi proselytizing network that extended throughout the U.S.

"The purpose of the MIA/Dawa offices is also of relevance...to obtain intelligence on individuals and communities of value to Saudi Arabia intelligence or government purposes." And Jarrah, "a key figure of the 9/11 investigation," is described as having a "controlling, guiding and directing influence on all aspects of Sunni extremist activity in Southern California."

### **FBI QUERIES OF 'HIGHEST INTEREST' TO SAUDIS**

Further, the report notes Jarrah was close to Prince Bandar and later worked for him in Saudi Arabia at the National Security Ministry.

None of that was known, or confirmed, in January 2010 when one FBI report stated, "It has been uncovered that Musaed al Jarrah may have played a leadership role in the overall coordination of logistics support for 9/11 hijackers Nawaf al Hazmi and Khalid al-Mihdhar...Al-Jarrah oversaw the handling of the

hijackers through his subordinates Fahad al-Thumairy and Omar Ahmed al-Bayoumi and by personal contact with the hijackers on numerous occasions.”

Jarrah, who has denied any connection to 9/11, is identified in other declassified FBI reports written as early as 2003 as being “heavily connected/linked to Saudi Sunni extremists operating inside the U.S.”

In addition to his religious duties in Los Angeles, Thumairy was also an employee of the embassy’s Da’Wa office. “FBI queries [about him] were of interest to the highest levels of the Saudi government,” says the 2021 report. “Al Thumairy was a close contact of the 9/11 hijackers support network and may have known al Hazmi and al Mihdhar and/or arranged for their meeting key members of the support network.”

Thumairy and Jarrah, his supervisor, were in frequent telephonic contact, FBI records show.

A recently declassified January 2008 FBI report says agents interviewed a man whose name is redacted. Following a few lines blanked out “at the direction of another U.S. Government Agency or Department,” the report goes on, “At KFM [King Fahd Mosque] BLANK there was a phone call from overseas, possibly from Malaysia or Indonesia, and someone asked for Thumairy and stated that ‘the guys’ were coming in and needed to be picked up at the airport.

‘The guys’ in the community meant the two 9/11 hijackers that passed through Los Angeles before going to San Diego.”

## **TWO ‘VERY SIGNIFICANT’ GUYS**

Hazmi and Mihdhar had attended the “[al Qaeda summit](#)” in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in early January 2000. The meeting, at which the U.S. attacks were reportedly planned, was headed by admitted 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. Hazmi and Mihdhar flew to Los Angeles on Jan. 15.

Thumairy has denied knowing Hazmi or Mihdhar. But the 2008 report says agents were told Thumairy had an Arabic-speaking taxi driver who ran errands for him to pick up “the guys” at the airport and take them to an apartment complex that Thumairy had rented.

More information was obtained in March 2020 when Operation Encore agents interviewed a confidential source about the relationship between another unidentified man – apparently the taxi driver – and the hijackers. The source said the man told him Thumairy “asked him to look after two very ‘significant’ people,” who turned out to be Hazmi and Mihdhar. The source said he saw the man with Hazmi and Mihdhar at the King Fahd Mosque “almost every day, even sometimes in the company of al-Thumairy in the library of the mosque.”

Omar al Bayoumi, the third initial focus of Operation Encore, was a middle-aged student and allegedly one of about 50 “ghost” employees who were paid by the Saudi aviation company Dallah Avco but didn’t actually work.

Bayoumi helped Hazmi and Mihdhar with many day-to-day activities, like obtaining a place to live. Bayoumi has said he met the future hijackers by chance at a Los Angeles restaurant – a claim skeptical FBI agents did not believe.

## **FBI CONFIRMS BAYOUMI A SAUDI SPY**

Bayoumi has long been described publicly as a “suspected” Saudi spy. A newly declassified FBI report dated June 14, 2017 says flatly that “in the late 1990s and up to September 11, 2001 Omar al Bayoumi was paid a monthly stipend as a cooptee of the Saudi General Intelligence Presidency [GIP] via then Ambassador Prince Bandar bin Sultan al Saud. The information al Bayoumi obtained on persons of interest in the Saudi community in Los Angeles and San Diego and other issues, which met certain GIP intelligence requirements, would be forwarded to Bandar. Bandar would then inform the GIP of items of interest to the GIP for further investigation/vetting or follow up.”

“Allegations about al Bayoumi’s involvement with Saudi intelligence were not confirmed at the time of the 9/11 Commission report. The above information confirms these allegations,” the 2017 report says.

Jarrah, Thumairy and Bayoumi have all been deposed in the massive New York civil litigation that pits 9/11 family members against Saudi Arabia. What they had to say is secret, however, due to a court-approved FBI “protective order.” (A transcript of Jarrah’s testimony was leaked to Yahoo! News by an employee of one of the law firms representing the families and is now before the court for possible sanctions.)

Saudi clerics and diplomats Adel al Sadhan and Mutaib al Sudairy also receive special attention in the 2021 report. FBI records from 2010, but declassified and released only late last year, say the pair were “assessed to be part of a network of individuals connected to the facilitation of two 9/11 hijackers, Nawaf al-Hazmi and Khalid al-Mihdhar..[and] possibly served in the capacity of an advance intelligence team involved in laying the groundwork for [them] before their arrival in Southern California in early 2000.” Sadhan worked under Jarrah at the Saudi Embassy.

For about four months in 2000, Sudairy roomed in Columbus, MO, with Ziyad Khaleel “a known key communications equipment procurement officer for UBL [Usama bin Laden] and provided satellite phones used in the 1998 embassy bombings in Africa,” says the 2010 report.

Sudairy was called five times by Bayoumi while the hijackers were in San Diego with Bayoumi. “The dates of the calls are significant,” says the report. For example, it notes that one call was on Feb. 2, 2000. Two days later, “Bayoumi co-signed a loan agreement for the apartment he obtained for the hijackers and brought them to a Bank of America to assist them in opening a bank account.”

#### **BASNAN AND ANTHRAX**

Osama Basnan, a former Saudi embassy employee whose wife received thousands of dollars in monthly payments from the wife of Prince Bandar, was “a known associate of the hijackers in Southern California” according to the 2021 report. “In 1992, Basnan hosted a party for blind Sheik Omar Rahman in Washington, D.C. prior to the 1993 World Trade Center bombing...After Rahman was jailed [for conspiracy in the bombing] Rahman dispatched a messenger to Basnan to instruct him not to contact Rahman in jail.”

“Basnan was living in the same [San Diego] apartment complex on 9/11/01 where al-Bayoumi and the hijackers had resided and al-Bayoumi’s mail was being forwarded to Basnan’s apartment. Basnan harbors anti-American sentiments and espouses pro-UBL opinions,” the 2021 report says.

Much in the report about Basnan, said to be considered the “Omad,” or informal mayor, of San Diego’s Saudi community has come out previously. This has not:

On an unspecified date in 2001 Basnan “asked BLANK specific questions about how Anthrax and Small Pox are transmitted and what affects infection has on the human body. On BLANK 2001, Basnan asked BLANK specific questions about how Small Pox infection advances through the human body. Basnan BLANK was true that just prior to dying a Small Pox victim suffers extreme abdominal pain. On BLANK 2001, BLANK Basnan’s wife, Majeda Dweikat, in possession of a book title ‘Chemical and Biological Weapons: Anthrax and Sarin.’ The book was in Basnan’s residence. BLANK Dweikat had tabbed a section of the book that showed the skin coming off a body.” A paragraph after that is redacted.

The anthrax attacks in the U.S. began a week after 9/11 when letters laced with anthrax spores were mailed to several news media outlets and two Democratic senators. Five people were killed and 17 others infected. Years later, federal authorities put the blame on a scientist at Fort Detrick, MD, who committed suicide while under FBI surveillance.

Ahmed Kattan, currently adviser to the Saudi Royal Court with the rank of minister, was at the Saudi Embassy in Washington from 1984 to 2005 where he served as deputy to Prince Bandar. Much about him

in the 2021 report is redacted, but not this new disclosure: “Kattan was responsible for the departure of the Bin Laden family members [from the U.S.] following 9/11.”

According to Saudi Arabia’s website, “The Royal Court is the link between the King of Saudi Arabia and the governmental institutions, and it is the Chief Executive Office of the King.”

### **FBI REPORT ON SAUDI CHARITIES AND TERRORISM**

The 2021 FBI report lists detailed information about numerous other Saudi individuals, educational institutions, and charities, most notably the Muslim World League (MWL).

“The primary NGO [non-government organization] of Saudi Arabia was MWL which operated the International Islamic Relief Organization [IIRO], Sana Bell [Sanabel Alkeheer Seeds of Charity, an investment arm], Alharamain and World Assembly of Muslim Youth [WAMY],” the report says. They were collectively run out of offices in Herndon, VA.

The 2021 report about those other offices “associated” with the Saudi Embassy “documents the extensive ties to the Saudi Arabian government as well as extensive ties to terrorism – specifically AQ [al Qaeda]. AQ members were employed within these organizations and utilized funding for terrorism support and used the offices for cover for movement of personnel.”

The Institute of Islamic and Arabic Sciences of America (IIASA), Fairfax, VA, is a U.S subsidiary of Imam Mohammed bin Saud University in Saudi Arabia. The 2021 report says the Saudi Embassy “was known to finance the IIASA and its primary administrators and teachers were Saudi Arabian diplomats. The IIASA was one of the many pieces of Saudi proselytizing activity in the U.S.”

IIASA’s president was Prince Bandar.

More than a half-dozen pages about IIASA were heavily censored for national security and other reasons. But not this curious sentence: “between BLANK and BLANK 2003 the IIASA deposited approximately \$23,318,623 into its accounts. The primary source of these funds was the Saudi Embassy and the Saudi Arabian Monetary Association [SAMA].”

### **FBI: ‘EXTREMIST NATURE OF SAUDI SOCIETY’**

The 2021 report also discusses “Saudi Arabian perception management campaigns” employed in Saudi schools and mosques and to influence Americans’ view of the country after it came out shortly after 9/11 that 15 of the 19 individuals who perpetrated the airplane attacks were Saudis.

9/11 was also followed by news reports about inflammatory teaching material in both Saudi K-12 schools and Saudi-run mosques in the U.S. and overseas. The report says, “The Saudis launched various public relations campaigns to discredit these reports.”

More than a decade later, a CIA report about Saudi elementary and middle school curriculums stated, “The monotheism texts teach hatred as part of the doctrine of disavowal which promotes hostility toward non-Muslims. This doctrine, which jihadists often advocate, is included throughout many other books in the curriculum... The monotheism textbooks for all five grades also stress the theme of religious violence.”

“The report concludes, ‘Even if the Saudis moderate some of the offending passages in the higher-grade textbooks, the youngest and most impressionable segment of Saudi society will still have been exposed to this incitement to religious hatred and violence, and many will have already internalized these teachings.’”

“This analysis as well as more recent open-source reports regarding the Saudi clerical establishment highlight that the extremist nature of Saudi society is still prevalent,” the 2021 FBI report concludes.

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HEADLINE	05/15 Suicide blast, gunmen kill 8 in Pakistan
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.voanews.com/a/suicide-blast-gunmen-kill-8-people-in-pakistan/6574053.html">https://www.voanews.com/a/suicide-blast-gunmen-kill-8-people-in-pakistan/6574053.html</a>

GIST	<p>ISLAMABAD — Pakistani officials said Sunday militant attacks in the country’s northwest had killed at least eight people, including security force members, children and members of the minority Sikh group.</p> <p>The deadliest attack occurred in North Waziristan, a volatile district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, killing three soldiers and three children, according to a military statement. It said the children were aged between 4 and 11 years.</p> <p>The Pakistani district borders Afghanistan and was a hub of terrorist groups until recently.</p> <p>“Intelligence agencies are investigating to find out about suicide bomber and his handlers / facilitators,” said the military’s media wing, the Inter Services Public Relations.</p> <p>Separately, police and witnesses said unknown gunmen shot dead two Sikh shopkeepers in a drive-by shooting in the provincial capital, Peshawar. The assailants managed to flee after the shooting.</p> <p>There were no immediate claims of responsibility for either attack. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif condemned the militant violence in a statement.</p> <p>The Islamic State group has previously claimed attacks on the minority Sikh community.</p> <p>The outlawed Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, known as the Pakistani Taliban, routinely claims attacks against security forces in the Waziristan district and elsewhere in the country.</p> <p>Pakistani authorities say fugitive TTP leaders direct deadly raids from their sanctuaries across the Afghan border.</p> <p>Islamabad has been urging Afghanistan’s ruling Taliban to rein in the terrorist group’s activities.</p> <p>Pakistan and the United States list the TTP as a terrorist organization.</p>
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## Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	05/14 Most extreme heatwaves ever recorded
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20220514-scientists-identify-the-most-extreme-heatwaves-ever-recorded-globally">https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20220514-scientists-identify-the-most-extreme-heatwaves-ever-recorded-globally</a>
GIST	<p>A new study has revealed the most intense heatwaves ever across the world – and remarkably some of these went almost unnoticed decades ago.</p> <p>The research, led by the <a href="#">University of Bristol</a>, also shows heatwaves are projected to get hotter in future as climate change worsens.</p> <p>The western North America heatwave last summer was record-breaking with an all-time Canadian high of 49.6 °C in Lytton, British Columbia, on June 29, an increase of 4.6 °C from the previous peak.</p> <p>The new findings, published today in <a href="#">Science Advances</a>, uncovered five other heatwaves around the world which were even more severe, but went largely underreported.</p> <p>Lead author, climate scientist Dr Vikki Thompson at the University of Bristol, said: “The recent heatwave in Canada and the United States shocked the world. Yet we show there have been some even greater extremes in the last few decades. Using climate models, we also find extreme heat events are likely to increase in magnitude over the coming century – at the same rate as the local average temperature.”</p>

Heatwaves are one of the most devastating extreme weather events. The western North America heatwave was the most deadly weather event ever in Canada, resulting in hundreds of fatalities. The associated raging wildfires also led to extensive infrastructure damage and loss of crops.

But the study, which calculated how extreme heatwaves were relative to the local temperature, showed the top three hottest-ever in the respective regions were in Southeast Asia in April 1998, which hit 32.8 °C, Brazil in November 1985, peaking at 36.5 °C, and Southern USA in July 1980, when temperatures rose to 38.4 °C.

Dr Vikki Thompson, from the university's Cabot Institute for the Environment, said: "The western North America heatwave will be remembered because of its widespread devastation. However, the study exposes several greater meteorological extremes in recent decades, some of which went largely under the radar likely due to their occurrence in more deprived countries. It is important to assess the severity of heatwaves in terms of local temperature variability because both humans and the natural eco-system will adapt to this, so in regions where there is less variation, a smaller absolute extreme may have more harmful effects."

The team of scientists also used sophisticated climate model projections to anticipate heatwave trends in the rest of this century. The modelling indicated levels of heatwave intensity are set to rise in line with increasing global temperatures.

Although the highest local temperatures do not necessarily cause the biggest impacts, they are often related. Improving understanding of climate extremes and where they have occurred can help prioritize measures to help tackle this in the most vulnerable regions.

Co-author Professor Dann Mitchell, Professor in Climate Sciences at the University of Bristol, said: "Climate change is one of the greatest global health problems of our time, and we have showed that many heatwaves outside of the developed world have gone largely unnoticed. The country-level burden of heat on mortality can be in the thousands of deaths, and countries which experience temperatures outside their normal range are the most susceptible to these shocks."

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HEADLINE	<b>05/13 Cool spring, bees struggle to pollinate</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/environment/in-cool-spring-bees-struggle-to-pollinate-northwest-cherry-crop/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/environment/in-cool-spring-bees-struggle-to-pollinate-northwest-cherry-crop/</a>
GIST	<p>HOOD RIVER, Oregon — Grower Brad Fowler walked into the cherry orchard on yet another May day when the temperatures struggled to climb above 50 degrees and a chill wind swept through the long rows of trees at the tail end of their annual bloom.</p> <p>Fowler searched for signs of honeybees doing the vital work of pollination that sets fruit as they move from blossom to blossom. On a warm day, he might find 20 bees in each tree, their flights creating a steady hum. On this morning, there was an unsettling quietness. He could only find a few bees spread about the trees he examined.</p> <p>"I am surprised they are out at all, as cold as it is," Fowler said.</p> <p>Here in the Hood River valley in northern Oregon, and all throughout the prime Pacific Northwest cherry-growing regions, the cool spring weather has often kept the bees — billions of which are brought into the region's fruit orchards each year — inside, or close by, the hives of their wooden box colonies.</p> <p>The low temperatures have resulted in slower and later flowering of the cherry trees. In some orchards, when temperatures prime for bee flight finally arrived, the window for blossom pollination had already closed.</p>



B. J. Thurlby, president of Northwest Cherry Growers, says the challenges in pollinating this crop, along with damage from the cold, are expected to reduce this year's cherry crop by 35% compared with the average volume of the past five years.

"There's bud kill from the cold, and then there's lack of pollination, and I'd say that's probably split 50-50," said Thurlby, who forecasts a late start to the harvest season, probably June 5 or 6.

Most of the Northwest's cherries are grown in Washington, where in 2021 they ranked as the fifth most valuable crop. In Yakima, hub of one of the state's cherry-growing areas, the average high for April was 11 degrees below the mean, according to the National Weather Service.

This also has been a wet spring, with snowpacks in many areas of the Cascades at least 130% of average, and in the Oregon basin above the Hood River Valley, more than double the average as of May 12, according to the Natural Resources Conservation Service. This is in stark contrast to some other areas of the West, including California, which is in the grip of extreme drought. Water restrictions are in place in the Los Angeles area and farmers can't use as much water for irrigation, forcing some to let land go unused.

### **Spring challenges**

Fowler, president of Hood River Cherry Company, grows some of the Pacific Northwest's highest-elevation cherries, which means some trees are still in bloom and he remains hopeful for a strong crop. "It's just up to the bees, and if they can get the job done," Fowler said.

Hood River Cherry's more than 300 acres of trees grow in three orchards ranging from 1,850 feet elevation to a tract — with a spectacular backdrop of Mount Hood — that is 2,450 feet above sea level and represents the upper limits of where cherries in this valley can make a viable crop.

Fowler is a former logger who found these tracts, which previously were covered with timber, to be the most affordable options as he and his wife, Kathryn Klein, started growing cherries in the 1990s. They are convinced that higher-elevation orchards produce some of the sweetest, most crisp cherries in the Northwest. Their late-season ripening means they begin picking when other orchards have finished their harvests and markets are not so glutted.

Through the years, Fowler and Klein learned a lot about how to grow cherries under some extreme conditions and have developed a loyal customer base. But there are plenty of challenges, especially this spring.

A black bear, for example, has repeatedly wandered into one of the orchards, destroying some 13 boxed hives in pursuit of honey.

On many nights, Fowler has had to burn expensive propane to power the fans that warm the orchard by 2 to 3 degrees Fahrenheit and fend off crop damage from freezing temperatures.

Then, there are the honeybees, which arrived at Hood River Cherry orchards after a stint in California fertilizing the almond orchards. Early in April, nearly 600 colonies were placed at strategic locations around the orchards by beekeeper David Wendell just as the cherry trees appeared poised to bloom.

In a typical spring, most of the flowers would come out in about a week's time. But this bloom has happened in fits and starts over the past month.

The many days of low temperatures prompted more of the female worker bees, which when foraging for nectar and pollen have a life span of about six weeks, to stay inside the bee boxes to preserve heat, according to Wendell. The bee colonies need food to survive so Wendell travels around to more than a dozen orchards, distributing a sucrose-based syrup, which takes a lot of time and racks up thousands of dollars in added costs.

	<p>Despite the feeding, some bees have died, although Wendell estimates the mortality in Hood River Cherry orchards at 2% or less. A bigger percentage of bees has struggled and not been at full strength.</p> <p>“They’re stressed. It’s cold and crappy and it’s been that way for a week or so, and they might be a little bit more aggressive,” said Wendell, as he carefully removed a box to check on one of the hives in the lowest elevation of Hood River Cherry’s three orchards.</p> <p>But he found these bees to be in a relatively benign mood, tolerating his intrusion without stinging him.</p> <p><b>Coming warmth</b></p> <p>As the morning temperatures climbed ever so slightly, Fowler strolled again through his orchard to check on bee activity. He spotted some bees between the rows nestled in dandelion flowers, which provide a nectar that can contribute to the health of the bee colony.</p> <p>He hoped that, over time, more bees would find their way into the nearby rows filled with one of the orchard’s most popular cherry varieties, called Reginas, which were introduced from Germany and are a deep purple when ripe.</p> <p>The Reginas do not self-pollinate, which is why Fowler needs bees to pick up pollen from other varieties interspersed in the rows — and drop it in the Regina blossoms.</p> <p>“We’re crossing our fingers,” Fowler said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/13 NASA Mars helicopter perseverance</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2022/05/13/nasa-ingenuity-mars-helicopter-perseverance/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2022/05/13/nasa-ingenuity-mars-helicopter-perseverance/</a>
GIST	<p>If it flew, and that was very much a big <i>if</i>, the little helicopter would take to the skies on Mars five times — max — over a period of 31 days.</p> <p>But over the past year, the plucky little helicopter known as Ingenuity has taken to the <a href="#">Martian skies 28 times</a>, far exceeding expectations and giving scientists a new vantage point on the Red Planet. Over the past 13 months, it has stayed aloft in total for nearly an hour, traveling nearly 4.3 miles, with a max speed of 12.3 mph and reaching a top altitude of 39 feet.</p> <p>It’s traversed craters, taken photos of regions that would be hard to reach on the ground, and served as a surprisingly resilient scout that has adapted to the changing Martian atmosphere and survived its harsh dust storms and frigid nights.</p> <p>Now the engineers and scientists at NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory are worried that their four-pound, solar-powered drone on Mars, may be nearing the end of its life.</p> <p>Winter is setting in on Mars. The dust is kicking up, coating Ingenuity’s solar panels and preventing it from fully charging its six lithium-ion batteries. This month, for the first time since it landed on Mars more than a year ago, Ingenuity <a href="#">missed a planned communications session</a> with Perseverance, the Mars rover that it relies on to send data and receive commands from Earth.</p> <p>Will a dust-coated Ingenuity survive a Martian winter where temperatures routinely plunge below minus-100 degrees Fahrenheit? And if it doesn’t, how should the world remember the little helicopter that cost \$80 million to develop and more than five years to design and build? Those closest to the project say that as time winds down for Ingenuity, it’s hard to overstate its achievements.</p> <p>“The helicopter has just far exceeded those initial expectations,” Lori Glaze, the director of NASA’s planetary science division, told The Washington Post.</p>

Given the thinness of the Martian atmosphere, the scientists and engineers who worked on the Ingenuity weren't sure the experiment would succeed at all. Thomas Zurbuchen, the associate administrator of NASA's science mission directorate, [said at the time](#) that it was an endeavor that forced NASA to find the "right line between crazy and innovative."

So when the first flight, on April 19, 2021, was a success, [NASA heralded it as a Wright Brothers](#) moment. As a tribute, Ingenuity had a postage-size bit of fabric from the brothers' aircraft, known as the Flyer, attached to a cable under the solar panel.

Ingenuity flew to Mars tethered to the underbelly of the [Perseverance Rover, the star of NASA's most recent Mars mission](#). After traveling some 300 million miles over seven months, Perseverance touched down in a [dramatic landing in February 2021](#) under a parachute with a secret code snuck inside that read, "Dare Mighty Things."

The rover, the size of an SUV, landed at an area of Mars known as Jezero crater, which once held water and could yield clues to the history of the planet and whether life existed there. The rover is gathering rocks and soil samples that NASA hopes will be returned to Earth in a future mission, as well as [using its seven instruments](#) to conduct science experiments and test new technologies.

Ingenuity was something of an add-on, a technology demonstration that could prove useful for future missions and allow the space agency's scientists to explore more of the Martian landscape than they could by land alone.

But flying an autonomous drone on Mars would be extremely difficult. The atmosphere there is just 1 percent the density of Earth's, so to generate lift, the helicopter's four-foot-wide blades would have to spin incredibly fast — 2,500 rotations per minute.

"We built it as an experiment," Glaze said. "So it didn't necessarily have the flight-qualified parts that we use on the big missions like Perseverance." Some, such as [as components from smartphones](#), were even bought off-the-shelf, so "there were chances that they might not perform in the environment as we expected. And so there was a risk that it wasn't going to work."

As Ingenuity kept flying, controllers on the ground started to realize their little project could accomplish big things. Before its fifth flight, they [wrote in a blog post that](#) "our helicopter is even more robust than we had hoped. The power system that we fretted over for years is providing more than enough energy to keep our heaters going at night and to fly during the day. The off-the-shelf components for our guidance and navigation systems are also doing great, as is our rotor system. You name it, and it's doing just fine or better."

As it continued to perform, the scientists at NASA became increasingly intrigued by the idea that maybe this helicopter could become an integral part of the mission.

"What happened was, and this is really key, after Ingenuity performed so well on those first five flights, the science team from Perseverance came to us and said, 'You know what, we want this helicopter to keep operating to help us in our exploration and achieving our science goals,' " Glaze said.

So NASA decided to keep flying.

On its sixth flight, Ingenuity ran into trouble. The helicopter navigates with a camera that takes 30 pictures a second of the terrain below, each with a timestamp. An algorithm predicts what the camera should have seen at that particular moment based on images taken moments before. Then it calculates the difference between the predicted location and the actual location of features of the ground to correct its position, velocity and altitude.

But on this flight, the timestamps were off. As a result, Ingenuity looked like it was being flown by a drunk driver, “adjusting its velocity and tilting back and forth in an oscillating pattern,” [NASA said in the blog](#).

Still, it was able to land safely within 16 feet of its target because of “the considerable effort that has gone into ensuring that the helicopter’s flight control system has ample ‘stability margin,’ ” NASA wrote. In other words: “In a very real sense, Ingenuity muscled through the situation.”

Flight 9, in July, was also a [“nail biter,” as NASA wrote](#). Not just because Ingenuity broke records for flight duration and cruise speed, but because it flew over a crater, “an area called ‘Séítah’ that would be difficult to traverse with a ground vehicle like the Perseverance rover,” NASA wrote in its blog.

Because Ingenuity was designed as an experimental technology demonstration, engineers designed it to fly over largely flat terrain, more easily navigated by its onboard camera. For this flight, however, Ingenuity would have to dip into the crater. That required it to reduce its speed and for engineers to tweak the navigation algorithm. The flight was a success, and Ingenuity was able to beam back colored photos of the region, including a location that some think “may record some of the deepest water environments in old Lake Jezero,” NASA wrote. “Given the tight mission schedule, it’s possible that they will not be able to visit these rocks with the rover, so Ingenuity may offer the only opportunity to study these deposits in any detail.”

Since then, Ingenuity has soldiered on, overcoming obstacle after obstacle. At one point in September, it detected an engine problem [during its preflight checkout](#) “and did exactly what it was supposed to do: It canceled the flight.”

About a month later, the problem was fixed, and it returned to flight.

In April, it made another discovery — flying over the parachute that slowed the rover for its Mars landing, it spotted the ruins of the shell that had protected the rover as it plunged toward the Martian surface. There was a pair of human-made objects, sitting on another planet, images that “just blew my mind,” Glaze said. In the past, NASA has been able to spot vehicles on the surface of Mars through an orbiting spacecraft far away. But here were pieces of hardware, close up, in such high-definition that the “Dare-Mighty-Things” encoded into the chute was visible through a thin coating of red Martian dust.

Then, 10 days later, on April 29, it took its last flight to date, No. 28, a quarter-of-a-mile jaunt that lasted two-and-a-half minutes. Now NASA wonders if that will be the last one.

The space agency thinks the helicopter’s inability to fully charge its batteries caused the helicopter to enter a low-power state. When it went dormant, the helicopter’s onboard clock reset, the way household clocks do after a power outage. So the next day, as the sun rose and began to charge the batteries, the helicopter was out of sync with the rover: “Essentially, when Ingenuity thought it was time to contact Perseverance, the rover’s base station wasn’t listening,” NASA wrote.

Then NASA did something extraordinary: Mission controllers commanded Perseverance to spend almost all of May 5 listening for the helicopter.

Finally, little Ingenuity phoned home.

The radio link, NASA said, “was stable,” the helicopter was healthy, and the battery was charging at 41 percent.

But, as NASA warned, “one radio communications session does not mean Ingenuity is out of the woods. The increased (light-reducing) dust in the air means charging the helicopter’s batteries to a level that would allow important components (like the clock and heaters) to remain energized through the night presents a significant challenge.”

	<p>Maybe Ingenuity will fly again. Maybe not.</p> <p>“At this point, I can’t tell you what’s going to happen next,” Glaze said. “We’re still working on trying to find a way to fly it again. But Perseverance is the primary mission, so that we need to start setting our expectations appropriately.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/14 Cat litter as antidote for climate change?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/cat-litter-could-be-antidote-for-climate-change-researchers-say-11652490018?mod=hp_lead_pos9">https://www.wsj.com/articles/cat-litter-could-be-antidote-for-climate-change-researchers-say-11652490018?mod=hp_lead_pos9</a>
GIST	<p>CAMBRIDGE, Mass.—Researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology say they have found a potent new tool in the fight against global warming. It is basically cat litter.</p> <p>They soaked an odor-eating clay used in cat boxes in a copper solution to create a compound that they say snatches methane from passing air and turns it into carbon dioxide, a much less harmful greenhouse gas.</p> <p>The Energy Department gave the researchers \$2 million to design devices with the compound that can be attached to vents at coal mines and dairy barns, which are <a href="#">big methane emitters</a>. The idea is to alter the chemistry of emissions before they hit the open air, like a catalytic converter on a car.</p> <p>MIT’s researchers say their findings have the potential to greatly reduce the amount of methane in the atmosphere and slow warming temperatures on the planet. The discovery could also create another possible application for zeolite, a clay used to clean up some of humankind’s nastiest messes, from driveway oil spills to <a href="#">the 2011 meltdown</a> at Japan’s Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant.</p> <p>Zeolite’s magic is in its tiny pores, which enable it to function as a filter or a sponge, depending on the chemistry. It is used to strengthen cement, improve soil, eliminate smells, keep fruit from ripening and soothe cow stomachs. Keeping methane from the atmosphere could be its biggest job yet.</p> <p>Known commercially as natural gas, methane is many times more effective at trapping heat in the atmosphere than carbon dioxide, which is the byproduct of burning methane at power plants, <a href="#">on stoves</a> or <a href="#">atop oil wells</a>. A lot of methane wafts into the atmosphere at concentrations that are too low to burn.</p> <p>Besides coal mines and <a href="#">belching cattle</a>, methane seeps from swamps, landfills, <a href="#">manure lagoons</a> and <a href="#">melting permafrost</a>. It bubbles up from lake bottoms and escapes pipelines and drilling sites. Termites are notorious emitters.</p> <p>Nature’s ability to process methane has been <a href="#">overwhelmed by human activity</a>, from hot showers to hamburgers. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration scientists recorded the biggest annual increase of atmospheric methane on record last year, to an average concentration about 162% greater than preindustrial levels.</p> <p>Desirée Plata, an MIT professor leading the work, said that if emissions from the world’s coal mines were filtered through copper zeolite, methane could stop accumulating in the atmosphere. If methane emissions were reduced by 45% by 2030, projected warming would be reduced by a half-degree Celsius by 2100, according to climate experts.</p> <p>A half degree is nothing to sniff at. The United Nations’ advisory body on climate change says the difference between average global temperatures rising 1.5 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels and 2 degrees Celsius (a 0.9-degree Fahrenheit gap) equates to ecological mayhem. Species loss at twice the rate for plants and animals, triple for insects. Crop yields down 7% instead of 3%. Hardly any <a href="#">coral reefs</a> survive.</p>

Emissions-reduction plans are [falling short](#) of targets set by 2015's Paris Agreement on Climate Change, adding urgency to develop technologies that can help slow warming. The World Meteorological Organization said last week that the odds are even that global average temperatures will temporarily exceed 1.5 degrees above preindustrial levels during the next five years.

In an MIT lab crowded with gas cylinders and scientific instruments, jars of cloudy, sky-blue soup sloshed around a mechanized spit, exchanging ions. Nearby, doctoral student Rebecca Brenneis poured the mix—water, copper nitrates and a few grams of zeolite—over a glass-fiber filter. The solids cracked as they dried, like a desert after rain.

Dr. Plata said she was originally pondering a methane-erasing compound that could be used to patch leaky pipelines, which are often neglected due to the expense. Her inspiration was methanotrophs, bacteria that metabolize methane fizzing up from seafloors and lake beds.

Her team sought ways to mimic nature and break down methane without dangerously high temperatures, explosive gases or expensive metal catalysts required in other techniques, she said. Scientific literature suggested zeolite. So did an MIT adage: “If you want to make something dirt cheap, make it out of dirt.”

Zeolite usually costs between \$50 and \$300 a ton, according to the U.S. Geological Survey, which has deemed the mineral abundant enough to not bother estimating reserves.

“It has crazy unique properties, which are potentially incredibly valuable,” said Rob Crangle, the Geological Survey's acting zeolite specialist. For now, shipping can cost more than the material, which helps explain why zeolite has lost cat-litter market share to other minerals, shredded corn stalks, walnut shells and old newspapers.

Last year, 87,000 metric tons of zeolite were extracted from nine domestic mines, the Geological Survey estimates. That is consistent with recent years, but up about sixfold from production levels before the 1990s, when more zeolite was added to animal feed and new applications emerged in water filtration and odor control.

Justin Mitchell said he hears loads of researchers as director of sales at KMI Zeolite Inc., which operates a mine near Death Valley, Calif. The Energy Department buys a lot from the mine to soak up liquids in drums of radioactive waste in an underground nuclear dump in New Mexico. Mr. Mitchell is headed to a biogas conference in Las Vegas later this month to pitch zeolite in processes that purify and divert methane fumes from manure lagoons and sewage-treatment plants to the gas grid.

The MIT findings were peer-reviewed and published in December by the American Chemical Society journal ACS Environmental Au. “Atmospheric- and Low-Level Methane Abatement via an Earth-Abundant Catalyst” describes how, with not much more heat that is needed to cook a pizza, copper-spiked zeolite can zap methane from passing air.

The researchers are headed this summer to South Dakota, where a dairy farmer has volunteered the family herd for field tests. A big question they want to answer is how the compound will handle the dampness of the air that billows from hundreds of ruminants, which is tough to replicate in a lab.

Work is still at the test-tube stage at MIT. Experiments are conducted with a tabletop tangle of electronics, tubes, a block of valves and a reactor the size of a microwave. A larger reactor is being installed in a mechanical engineering lab across campus for experiments needed to determine the best grain size and configuration of zeolite particles inside the device.

“If you can imagine all the problems when you try to blow lots of air through cat litter, that's where we are now,” Dr. Plata said.

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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/may/13/south-africa-floods-climate-crisis-global-heating">https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/may/13/south-africa-floods-climate-crisis-global-heating</a>
GIST	<p>The massive and deadly floods that struck <a href="#">South Africa</a> in April were made twice as likely and more intense by global heating, scientists have calculated. The research demonstrates that the climate emergency is resulting in devastation.</p> <p>Catastrophic <a href="#">floods and landslides</a> hit the South African provinces of KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape on 11 April following exceptionally heavy rainfall.</p> <p>The South African president, Cyril Ramaphosa called the floods a “catastrophe of enormous proportions” and “the biggest tragedy we have ever seen”, later declaring a national state of disaster. At least 453 people were killed and the port of Durban, the largest in <a href="#">Africa</a>, was closed, causing global disruption in the supply of food and minerals.</p> <p>Other recent studies found that the heatwave in the Pacific Northwest region of North America in 2021 would have been “<a href="#">virtually impossible</a>” without climate change, and that global heating exacerbated the <a href="#">extreme floods in Europe</a> in July 2021 and the <a href="#">storms in Madagascar</a>, Malawi and Mozambique in January.</p> <p>“If we do not reduce emissions and keep global temperatures below 1.5C, many extreme weather events will become increasingly destructive,” said Dr Izidine Pinto, at the University of Cape Town and part of the team that conducted the analysis. “We need to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to a new reality where floods and heatwaves are more intense and damaging.”</p> <p>Dr Friederike Otto, at Imperial College London and also part of the team, said: “Most people who died in the floods lived in informal settlements, so again we are seeing how climate change disproportionately impacts the most vulnerable people. However, the flooding of the port of Durban is also a reminder that there are no borders for climate impacts. What happens in one place can have substantial consequences elsewhere.”</p> <p>A <a href="#">brutal heatwave</a> is being endured in India and Pakistan and is certain to have been made worse by global heating. “There is no doubt that climate change is a huge game changer when it comes to extreme heat,” <a href="#">said Otto</a>. “Every heatwave in the world is now made stronger and more likely to happen because of human-caused climate change.”</p> <p>Nick Silkstone, at the <a href="#">UK Met Office</a>, <a href="#">said</a>: “Temperatures are expected to peak on Saturday, when maximum values could reach around 49-50C [120-122F] in the hottest locations, such as Jacobabad, and the Sibi area of Pakistan. These values are around 5-7C above average for the time of year.”</p> <p>The analysis of the role of global heating in the South African floods used weather data and computer simulations to assess how likely the extreme rainfall was to happen in today’s heated climate – 1.2C hotter than before the industrial age – and in the unheated climate of the past.</p> <p>The results showed such extreme rainfall could now be expected about once every 20 years compared with only once every 40 years in the past, meaning it has become twice as likely. The assessment also showed the rainfall was 4-8% more intense than it would have been without climate change.</p> <p>This is consistent with scientific understanding of how climate change influences heavy rainfall. As the atmosphere becomes warmer it can hold more water, increasing the risk of downpours.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/14 Progress made since Cop26?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/may/14/cash-coal-cars-and-trees-what-progress-has-been-made-since-cop26">https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/may/14/cash-coal-cars-and-trees-what-progress-has-been-made-since-cop26</a>
GIST	In the run-up to <a href="#">Cop26</a> , the UK government used the mantra “Cash, coal, cars and trees to keep the world to 1.5C” to highlight four key areas on which the conference would focus.

## Cash

At Cop26, rich countries were supposed to fulfil a longstanding promise, made in 2009, to [provide \\$100bn a year in climate finance to the developing world from 2020](#).

The actual amounts provided are still falling short, but developed countries did produce evidence that they would meet the promise this year or next, with the five-year average from 2020 to 2025 at around \$100bn. Developing countries have also been promised a new financial settlement that would see greater flows from 2025, with details yet to be decided.

In the months since, however, there has been little advance on the Cop26 promises of cash. Rachel Kyte and Lord Stern, both former top [World Bank](#) officials, told the Guardian of several concerns over the World Bank's programmes on climate. Stern said the bank's resources would be stretched by the additional strains of high energy and food prices around the world, and the effects of the war in Ukraine.

Kyte cast doubt on whether the World Bank was truly committed to the climate fight: "[The World Bank's] weak showing at Glasgow and continued questions about their appetite for urgent action has meant that coalitions form without them at the helm. Broader questions of whether the Bretton Woods institutions are fit for purpose for the climate crisis grow."

The private sector has also come under closer scrutiny. The GFANZ network – the Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero – was [announced with fanfare by Mark Carney](#), former governor of the Bank of England and UN climate envoy. It is unclear, however, how much of that is flowing to the poorest countries that need it most.

There are also questions, raised by the [Guardian's carbon bubble investigation](#), over whether investors are pouring more money into fossil fuels, now enjoying a bonanza, rather than clean tech. There is little in the GFANZ rules to stop them. Carney said it was the job of governments to regulate and provide incentives that would encourage capital into the right directions: "Finance will not drive the net-zero transition on its own. Finance is an enabler, a catalyst that will speed what governments and companies initiate. If there is commitment to move to a sustainable, resilient and fair energy system, and the right policies are made, finance will be there."

## Coal

Coal was a clear focus of Cop26, though some of the successes the UK initially trumpeted for commitments to phase out coal turned out to be [less solid than claimed](#). In the closing moments of the talks, coal also became a flashpoint as China and India refused to sign up to a "phase-out" of coal, and insisted on changing the term to "phase-down".

Since then, new evidence has emerged of coal expansion as recovery from Covid has quickened, and the war in [Ukraine](#) has spurred some countries to consider a return to coal, or a delay to its phasing out. Fatih Birol, executive director of the International Energy Agency (IEA), said coal must be at the forefront of Cop27: "The biggest risk is the growing appetite for infrastructure investments in coal. If we are not able to slow that down or stop it, we may lock in our future ... If I had to pick one issue [for Cop27], that would be the one."

## Cars

Electric vehicle sales [doubled in key markets](#) last year, as manufacturers ramped up production and consumers embraced new models. But the future of the market this year is looking more uncertain; the war in Ukraine has disrupted key supply chains, and Volkswagen in Germany said earlier this month that it had [sold out of electric vehicles](#) for this year for its EU and US markets. Other manufacturers are also struggling with rising costs and looking for alternative sources for components.

Many green campaigners are also concerned that talking about cars is the wrong focus – they say we should be talking about transport. Investment in public transport, making it cheaper or even free, is one of the quickest ways to bring down demand for oil, according to the IEA.

## Trees

The UK made action on forests a key focus at Cop26, with a gathering of world leaders to discuss forests and land use and a separate two-day programme of events. A deal to [halt global deforestation](#), signed by China, the US and Brazil among other nations, was the first big “win” of the Glasgow fortnight.

But in the past months, Brazil’s deforestation rate in the Amazon has [soared to devastating record levels](#), and a report on the Congo – one of the world’s most important remaining rainforests – has [cast doubt on the government’s willingness](#) to take the action needed to halt logging and destruction.

Meanwhile, another key forestry meeting this year – the Convention on Biological Diversity (meant to be held in Kunming, China, in 2020, but delayed) – is now in limbo due to the Chinese government’s response to the resurgence of Covid-19. Whether or when the conference will take place at all is now unknown.

Lord Goldsmith, the UK minister in charge of the Cop26 forestry efforts, has been on a frantic round of diplomacy this year to shore up the forest deal. He said the UK wanted world leaders to meet every year to discuss progress. “The contribution of forestry to the overall global emissions reductions needed is potentially huge. It could contribute about 10%-15% to the global emissions target.”

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HEADLINE	05/13 Climate scientists rejoice at snowy spring
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/weather/snowpack-helped-by-cold-snowy-spring-weather/281-34c2f713-203f-4d96-b8ff-188909306d68">https://www.king5.com/article/weather/snowpack-helped-by-cold-snowy-spring-weather/281-34c2f713-203f-4d96-b8ff-188909306d68</a>
GIST	<p>SNOQUALMIE PASS, Wash — Snow flurries are <a href="#">expected above 6,000 feet in the mountains</a> this weekend as Washington continues to trudge through one of the coldest springs on record.</p> <p>Assistant State Climatologist Karin Bumbaco with the University of Washington said <a href="#">last month was the third coldest April</a> on record and also the 10th wettest.</p> <p>"I can relate to people grouching about the wet April. I've also had outdoor plans that have been spoiled on weekends with April rain, but overall, it's a good thing," she said.</p> <p>Last month, Washingtonians experienced about 137% of normal precipitation levels, which Bumbaco said is a good thing when you think about the very beginning of April.</p> <p>"On April 1, <a href="#">we were only at 80% of normal</a> [snowpack]," Bumbaco said. "So we've made up a lot of snow in just the last few weeks."</p> <p>Further into April, things changed as the month crept into record low temperatures. April 2022 became the third coldest for Washington. The second coldest was just 11 years ago in 2011, and the coldest April was over 100 years ago in 1895.</p> <p>As many Washingtonians wait on warmer months, Bumbaco said the winter-like weather is exactly what the state needed, even as the snowpack officially reached 128% of normal levels earlier this week.</p> <p>"We want snow in our mountains, of course, because we use that water for a lot of different things once we enter our dry season," she said. "So it's used for irrigation. It's used for fish. It's also used for recreation as well, and then it can also impact our fire season."</p>
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HEADLINE	05/13 Cause of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/researchers-find-cause-of-sudden-infant-death-syndrome">https://www.q13fox.com/news/researchers-find-cause-of-sudden-infant-death-syndrome</a>

**GIST**

**LOS ANGELES** - Scientists have [published](#) a new study that may offer groundbreaking insight into Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), an occurrence that has previously baffled the medical community.

SIDS is the unexplained death of a seemingly healthy baby less than a year old, typically during sleep, according to the Mayo Clinic. The CDC reports SIDS accounted for 37% of infant deaths in the United States in 2019.

Now, researchers at The Children's Hospital in Westmead in Sydney, Australia, were able to confirm the cause of SIDS which typically occurs when infants suddenly die in their sleep.

The medical community had previously believed SIDS was caused by a complication in the infant's part of the brain that controls the regulation of breathing while sleeping.

In the latest study, researchers found that infants who died from SIDS had lower levels of an enzyme known as Butyrylcholinesterase (BChE).

This enzyme is thought by scientists to help regulate pathways in the brain which drive a person's breathing, confirming what scientists had originally hypothesized.

"We conclude that a previously unidentified cholinergic deficit, identifiable by abnormal -BChEsa, is present at birth in SIDS babies and represents a measurable, specific vulnerability prior to their death," the researchers stated.

Dr. Carmel Harrington, an honorary research fellow who led the study, said its findings were game-changing. Harrington said the study provided an explanation for SIDS and hope for prevention of deaths associated with this mysterious condition.

"An apparently healthy baby going to sleep and not waking up is every parent's nightmare and until now there was absolutely no way of knowing which infant would succumb. But that's not the case anymore. We have found the first marker to indicate vulnerability prior to death," Harrington said in a news release.

The researchers explained that BChE plays a vital role in the brain's arousal pathway. They further explained that a deficiency in BChE likely suggests an arousal deficit in babies, which would reduce their abilities to wake or respond to the external environment, making them susceptible to SIDS.

"Babies have a very powerful mechanism to let us know when they are not happy. Usually, if a baby is confronted with a life-threatening situation, such as difficulty breathing during sleep because they are on their tummies, they will arouse and cry out. What this research shows is that some babies don't have this same robust arousal response," Harrington said.

Dr. Matthew Harris, an emergency medicine pediatrician at Cohen Children's Medical Center/ Northwell Health on Long Island, New York, was not involved with the study but told Fox News, "The findings of the study are interesting and important. While the sample size is limited, the study seems to indicate that lower levels of this enzyme are associated with a higher risk for sudden infant death syndrome. Importantly, this might present an opportunity for both earlier screening for risk factors during the perinatal period, and might offer scientists and physicians an opportunity to discover an intervention."

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## Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	05/16 Highest prison rate: Uighurs in China
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.newsmax.com/world/globaltalk/china-uyghurs-in-prison/2022/05/16/id/1069991/">https://www.newsmax.com/world/globaltalk/china-uyghurs-in-prison/2022/05/16/id/1069991/</a>

Nearly one in 25 people in a county in the Uyghur heartland of China has been sentenced to prison on terrorism-related charges, in what is the highest known imprisonment rate in the world, an Associated Press review of leaked data shows.

A list obtained and partially verified by the AP cites the names of more than 10,000 Uyghurs sent to prison in just Konasheher county alone, one of dozens in southern Xinjiang. In recent years, China has waged a brutal crackdown on the Uyghurs, a largely Muslim minority, which it has described as a war on terror.

The list is by far the biggest to emerge to date with the names of imprisoned Uyghurs, reflecting the sheer size of a Chinese government campaign by which an estimated million or more people were swept into internment camps and prisons. It also confirms what families and rights groups have said for years: China is relying on a system of long-term incarceration to keep the Uyghurs in check, wielding the law as a weapon of repression.

Under searing international criticism, Chinese officials announced the closure in 2019 of short-term, extrajudicial internment camps where Uyghurs were thrown in without charges. However, although attention focused on the camps, thousands of Uyghurs still languish for years or even decades in prison on what experts say are trumped-up charges of terrorism.

Uyghur farmer Rozikari Tohti was known as a soft-spoken, family-loving man with three children and not the slightest interest in religion. So his cousin, Mihrigul Musa, was shocked to discover Tohti had been thrown into prison for five years for “religious extremism.” She said she knew others more likely to be swept up in Xinjiang’s crackdown on religion, such as another cousin who prayed every week, but not Tohti.

“Never did I think he would be arrested,” said Musa, who now lives in exile in Norway. “If you saw him, you would feel the same way. He is so earnest.”

From the list, Musa found out Tohti’s younger brother Abilikim Tohti also was sentenced to seven years on charges of “gathering the public to disturb social order.” Tohti’s next-door neighbor, a farmer called Nurmemet Dawut, was sentenced to 11 years on the same charges as well as “picking quarrels and provoking trouble.”

Konasheher county is typical of rural southern Xinjiang, and more than 267,000 people live there. The prison sentences across the county were for two to 25 years, with an average of nine years, the list shows. While the people on the list were mostly arrested in 2017, according to Uyghurs in exile, their sentences are so long that the vast majority would still be in prison.

Those swept up came from all walks of life, and included men, women, young people and the elderly. They had only one thing in common: They were all Uyghurs.

Experts say it clearly shows people were targeted simply for being Uyghur – a conclusion vehemently denied by Chinese authorities. Xinjiang spokesman Elijan Anayat said sentences were carried out in accordance with the law.

“We would never specifically target specific regions, ethnic groups or religions, much less the Uyghurs,” Anayat said. “We would never wrong the good, nor release the bad.”

The list offers the widest and most granular look yet at who is in prison in Xinjiang. It was obtained by Xinjiang scholar Gene Bunin from an anonymous source who described themselves as a member of China’s Han Chinese majority “opposed to the Chinese government’s policies in Xinjiang.”

The list was passed to The AP by Abduweli Ayup, an exiled Uyghur linguist in Norway. The AP authenticated it through interviews with eight Uyghurs who recognized 194 people on the list, as well as legal notices, recordings of phone calls with Chinese officials and checks of address, birthdays and identity numbers.

The list does not include people with typical criminal charges such as homicide or theft. Rather, it focuses on offenses related to terrorism, religious extremism or vague charges traditionally used against political dissidents, such as “picking quarrels and provoking trouble.” This means the true number of people imprisoned is almost certainly higher.

But even at a conservative estimate, Konasheher county’s imprisonment rate is more than 10 times higher than that of the United States, one of the world’s leading jailers, according to Department of Justice statistics. It’s also more than 30 times higher than for China as a whole, according to state statistics from 2013, the last time such figures were released.

Darren Byler, an expert on Xinjiang’s mass incarceration system, said most arrests were arbitrary and outside the law, with people detained for having relatives abroad or downloading certain cell phone applications. He has documented arrest quotas for local police, in some cases resulting in the men from entire villages being rounded up and whole families uprooted from their homes.

“It is really remarkable,” Byler said. “In no other location have we seen entire populations of people be described as terrorists or seen as terrorists. .... The state is trying to reframe the narrative and say, you know, all of these people are actually criminals.”

China has struggled for decades to control Xinjiang, where Uyghurs have long resented Beijing’s heavy-handed rule, resulting in violent clashes with the Han-dominated government. With the 9/11 attacks in the United States, Chinese officials began using the specter of terrorism to justify tight controls.

The crackdown kicked into high gear in 2017, after a string of knifings and bombings carried out by a small handful of Uyghur militants. The Chinese government defended the mass detentions as both lawful and necessary to combat terrorism.

In 2019, Xinjiang officials declared the short-term detention camps closed, and said that all of whom they described as “trainees” had “graduated.” Visits by Associated Press journalists to four former camp sites confirmed that they were shuttered or converted into other facilities.

But the prisons remain. Xinjiang went on a prison-building spree in tandem with the crackdown, and even as the camps closed, the prisons expanded. At least a few camp sites were converted into centers for incarceration, including one that was turned into a pre-trial detention center twice the size of Vatican City and estimated to have capacity for 10,000 people or more.

Satellite imagery obtained and analyzed by BuzzFeed suggests that by April 2021, the Chinese government had enough prison space in Xinjiang to cover a third of the island of Manhattan. In the meantime, China declared success in keeping Xinjiang safe.

“In the past five years, Xinjiang has been free from violent terrorist incidents,” said China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi in February. “People of all ethnicities have lived a happy and peaceful life.”

China is using the law “as a fig leaf of legality” in part to try and deflect international criticism about holding Uyghurs, said Jeremy Daum, a criminal law expert at Yale University’s Paul Tsai China Center.

“But following the law doesn’t mean justice or fairness,” said Daum, who reviewed the data and was not involved in its leak. “It just means it’s ‘legal.’”

Over the last eight years, experts say, Chinese authorities expanded the definition of extremism to include displays of religion such as growing a long beard or wearing a veil. Some charges for prisoners on the list are new and specific to Xinjiang, such as “preparing to carry out terrorism,” a charge that was newly defined in 2016. The sheer volume of the convictions was “extraordinary,” Daum added.



The plight of Nursimangul Abdureshid's family shows how so-called "students" released from internment camps can simply be sent to prisons by the Chinese government instead.

"It's a total lie, they just try to whitewash their crime," said Abdureshid, who lives in exile in Turkey.

In 2017, a relative told Abdureshid that both her parents and her younger brother had been taken away to study, a euphemism referring to the short-term detention camps. It was only three years later, in 2020, that the Chinese embassy called her with information that all three had been arrested and sentenced to prison for more than a decade.

The leaked list was the first outside confirmation of what had happened to her brother since that call, she said. Her brother, Memetali Abdureshid, 32, had been sentenced to 15 years and 11 months on charges of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble" and "preparing to carry out terrorist activities."

Nursimangul Abdureshid saw eight names she recognized on the list, but not those of her parents. She and six other Uyghur exiles who spoke with the AP believe the list is incomplete because they did not see some people they were close to, meaning the imprisonment rate could in fact be even higher.

The secretive nature of the charges against Memetali and others imprisoned is a red flag, experts say. Although China makes legal records easily accessible otherwise, almost 90% of criminal records in Xinjiang are not public.

The handful which have leaked show that people are being charged with "terrorism" for acts such as warning colleagues against watching porn and swearing, or praying in prison. In the most egregious cases, camp detainees were forced to confess their "crimes" in group sham trials and transferred to prisons, with no independent lawyers to defend them.

Another Uyghur from the township of Bulaqsu now living in exile said he knew 100 people on the list, including neighbors and cousins. Included were fathers and sons, both sentenced to jail, said the man, who spoke on condition of anonymity out of fear of retribution from Chinese authorities,

By the time Mahmutohti Amin, 81, a former spice trader who lives in Turkey, arrived in the Kashgar region of China in 2017, his son, Ghappar Tohti, had been arrested. His other son, Polat Tohti, also was arrested, his daughter-in-law told him.

But Amin only found out how long their sentences were when he saw the list. Ghappar got seven years; Polat got 11.

Abduweli Ayup, the Uyghur exile who passed the list to the AP, has closely documented the ongoing repression of his community. But this list in particular floored him: On it were neighbors, a cousin, a high school teacher.

"I had collapsed," Ayup said. "I had told other people's stories .... and now this is me telling my own story from my childhood."

The widely admired teacher, Adil Tursun, was the only one in the high school in Toquzaq who could teach Uyghur students in Chinese. He was a Communist Party member who had previously won a Model Worker award, and he tutored children during his free time. Every year, the students from his class had the best chemistry test scores in the town.

The names of Tursun and others on the list made no sense to Ayup because they were considered model Uyghurs. Some were even eager to assimilate into the Han Chinese mainstream.

"The names of the crimes, spreading extremist thoughts, separatism...these charges are absurd," he said.

	<p>But when Ayup circulated the list among the Uyghur diaspora to ask people to vouch for those they recognized, only eight out of 30 agreed to speak publicly. Ayup was disappointed, yet nonetheless determined to document the lockdown of his people.</p> <p>“We will win at the end, because we are on the side of justice,” he said. “We are on the right side of history.”</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>05/16 Winston-Salem NC shootings: 7 injured</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.cbsnews.com/news/seven-injured-shooting-winston-salem-north-carolina/">https://www.cbsnews.com/news/seven-injured-shooting-winston-salem-north-carolina/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>Seven people were wounded when shots were fired in multiple locations Sunday night in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, police said.</p> <p>Authorities first responded around 7:50 p.m. to a scene near a park and found more than 50 empty shell casings, according to CBS affiliate <a href="#">WNCN</a>.</p> <p>Two gunshot victims were then found nearby. Another four victims were then discovered at another spot. And a seventh victim, from that other location, had gone to a local hospital, WNCN reported.</p> <p>None of the injuries were life-threatening, the Winston-Salem Police Department told CBS News.</p> <p>Police said the incidents initially appeared to be connected, adding that the investigation is ongoing.</p> <p>There was no word on a possible suspect, or suspects, or any possible motives.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>05/15 Online investigators eye Russia war crimes</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.cbsnews.com/news/bellingcat-russia-putin-ukraine-60-minutes-2022-05-15/">https://www.cbsnews.com/news/bellingcat-russia-putin-ukraine-60-minutes-2022-05-15/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>The war crimes in Ukraine are among the worst of the 21st century, but they are just the latest in a history of assassinations and mass murder at the hands of Russian President Vladimir Putin. We know this, in large part, thanks to a team of online data detectives that calls itself Bellingcat. Since 2014, Bellingcat investigations have exposed Russia's undercover hit squads and tied Russian troops to atrocities. Suffice to say the Russian government denies everything you are about to see in this story. But that's exactly where Bellingcat comes in. Bellingcat's founder, Eliot Higgins, has created a method of mining online data and social media to put the lie to disinformation and unmask Vladimir Putin.</p> <p>Eliot Higgins: I feel it's almost my duty that when we're faced with all this information showing terrible things that are happening, it's to put it out there. It does involve risk. But then defending liberty, human rights, democracy involves taking risks. It's when we stop taking risks and we let the fear take hold that we see democracy die.</p> <p>We met Eliot Higgins last month in London as Bellingcat was building a database of social media exposing apparent war crimes in Ukraine. Eyewitness accounts of attacks on neighborhoods, assaults on hospitals, and murders of civilians are being collected and published on Bellingcat's website for all to see.</p> <p>Nearly everyone in Ukraine is a witness with a camera. Bellingcat is combining tens of thousands of social media posts to make them searchable by place and time.</p> <p>Eliot Higgins: And we look [at] as many sources as possible and use those sources to build a picture of what happened. Videos, photographs, satellite imagery. Then we look at the witness statements and the various allegations made by either side.</p> <p>Locations and times are corroborated with independent sources including satellite images and Google Street View. The goal is to provide verified evidence for future criminal trials.</p>

Eliot Higgins: And it also means that we're collecting an archive of material that for future generations, they can go back and look at this material. I mean, it's often said that, you know, history is written by the victors. But it's being written now. And it's being preserved now.

Ukraine is the biggest project in Bellingcat's short career. Higgins started Bellingcat in 2014 as, sort of, an accidental activist.

Eliot Higgins: I was not someone with a professional background. I was doing this merely as a hobby.

Scott Pelley: What were you doing for a living at the time?

Eliot Higgins: I was working for a company that housed refugees in the U.K. I then worked for a company that manufactured pipes. And then a company that manufactured lingerie. So, I had a wide range of experience but nothing that was directly related to conflict.

How Bellingcat is using TikTok to investigate the war in Ukraine  
On his off-hours, the conflict in Syria fascinated him—especially how social media was exposing atrocities there.

Scott Pelley: You found your calling.

Eliot Higgins: Indeed I did.

But his search for the truth began with a fairytale.

Scott Pelley: Where does the name come from?

Eliot Higgins: So, Bellingcat comes from the name of a fable, Belling the Cat. And it's about a group of mice who are very scared of a very large cat. So, they have a meeting, and they decide to put a bell on the cat's neck. But then they realize that no one knows how to do it, and no one is willing to volunteer to do it. So, what we're teaching people to do is bell the cat.

Higgins belled his first predator in 2014 when Russia went to war in eastern Ukraine. Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 was high over Ukraine on its way to Asia when a missile brought it down. 298 were killed. Everyone denied responsibility. But Higgins noticed, in the hours before the shootdown, there were many social media posts from bystanders who saw a missile launcher on a flatbed trailer traveling in eastern Ukraine.

Eliot Higgins: We started discovering social media posts of people who had seen the missile launcher being transported. And we also had social media posts from people who said there's a rocket that's just been shot up from this direction. And we could actually use their social media profiles to figure out where they lived.

Other posts were written by Russian soldiers homesick for family. Higgins found clues in each image—billboards, buildings, road signs—that let him fix the location and time of each post. When he arranged all of the social media into a timeline, he could run the convoy backward to its starting point.

Eliot Higgins: Using all those videos we were able to trace it all the way back to the military brigade it came from, the 53rd Air Defense Brigade.

Scott Pelley: In Russia.

Eliot Higgins: In Russia. And we used their social media profiles, the soldiers, their family members and everyone around them to reconstruct basically their network online which meant we could get their names, their ranks, their photographs, see who was in that convoy and who traveled to the border. So that allowed us to prove that Russia provided the missile launcher that shot down MH-17.

Bellingcat published its findings and Russia imposed a new law.

Christo Grozev: The Russian government passed a specific law banning soldiers from carrying-- mobile devices during hostilities, which is dubbed in Russia "the Bellingcat law."

Christo Grozev, is executive director of Bellingcat, leading its 30 full-time researchers. His personal focus has been on Russian political assassinations.

Scott Pelley: What have you learned about how Vladimir Putin operates?

Christo Grozev: What we have found out is that none of these crimes could have been perpetrated without Vladimir Putin being-- in the know, and not only aware but approving of all of these crimes. So, in a nutshell, what we found out was that Putin is operating an industrial-scale assassination program on his own people.

Bellingcat's next big project, the Russian assassination program, started in 2018 after a Russian defector and his daughter, living in Britain, were poisoned with a military-grade nerve agent. The British had passport photos and false names of two suspects but nothing else. Grozev knew that Russia's government and commercial records are for sale on an online black market. So, with the fake names, he bought the suspect's passport records.

Scott Pelley: The passport numbers on the two passports were identical, except for the last digit?

Christo Grozev: The last digit, exactly.

Scott Pelley: So they were clearly made one after the other?

Christo Grozev: Exactly.

Suspicious, Christo Grozev started data mining. Based on official records, it seemed as though both men were born at the age of 32. And there was an unusual stamp on the passport documents.

Christo Grozev: There was a big black stamp in the corner of their file which said, "Do not provide information on this person. In case of a query, call this number." And sure enough, we called that number, and it was the Ministry of Defense.

When the Ministry of Defense answered, Grozev knew the would-be assassins were military intelligence agents. To match their faces to their true identities, he spent weeks combing yearbooks and photographs from Russian military academies.

Christo Grozev: The end result was that we were able not only to identify the real identities and the affiliation to the military intelligence, we were able to find a third and a fourth member of the same kill team that the British did not even know about.

Over months, Grozev uncovered a network of Russian hitmen, working throughout Europe, armed with nerve agent from a government lab. He bought airline manifests and found some of the assassins' travel overlapped the campaign stops of alexei navalny, the top political opponent of Vladimir Putin.

Christo Grozev: And we found a total of 66 overlaps, way beyond any statistical possibility for a coincidence.

Scott Pelley: They'd been shadowing him for months, years?

Christo Grozev: They'd been shadowing him for four years. They started shadowing him the moment he announced his presidential aspirations in 2017. Apparently being on standby for a possible assassination whenever they would get the signal.

A signal came in 2020. On a campaign trip, Navalny was poisoned with that same nerve agent. He recovered in a German hospital, returned to oppose Putin, and is now in prison. Bellingcat's investigation found assassins also tailed other Putin opponents.

Christo Grozev: And we found, for example, that the team that had poisoned Navalny had tailed at a minimum 12 other opposition figures, three of whom had been killed, in fact, poisoned.

Investigations like that are published on Bellingcat's website which is blocked in Russia. Bellingcat is a nonprofit foundation which has trained more than 4,000 journalists and war crime investigators in its techniques of geolocation, verification, and data mining.

Alexa Koenig: We're headed into an entirely new era of human rights investigations, and war crimes investigations, more generally.

Bellingcat trained Alexa Koenig's team at the University of California, Berkeley, Human Rights Center. Koenig is the executive director of the center which has used Bellingcat's techniques to expose atrocities in Myanmar and chemical attacks in Syria.

Alexa Koenig: They're showing the world that you don't have to be a large outfit like The New York Times or the International Criminal Court to pull these disparate bits of information together, and actually get underneath who's done what to whom and when.

Still, Koenig says, this new era is challenged by the fact that anyone with an internet connection can be an investigator.

Scott Pelley: The problem becomes how do you make sure they're right?

Alexa Koenig: That's always the risk. And I think one big concern in this space is the ethics of doing this work and making sure that you don't get it wrong.

Alexa Koenig's UC Berkeley center recently worked with the United Nations to publish guidelines for witnesses who post evidence and for amateur investigators.

Scott Pelley: Standards.

Alexa Koenig: Yes.

Scott Pelley: Rules of evidence.

Alexa Koenig: Exactly. So a lotta people are being really innovative and creative about how to use a lot of digital tools and techniques to ultimately solve these puzzles. But the problem is a lot of them are not trained as legal investigators. They're not thinking about things like chain of custody, and how do you establish that something you grabbed from the internet hasn't been changed in transit, and should actually be trusted as reliable once it reaches a court of law? So, our work is hopefully designed around helping them do that in a way that maximizes that value for accountability.

Scott Pelley: Ultimately, what is your hope for your Ukraine investigations?

Christo Grozev: We already have been approached by the International Criminal Court. We've been approached by several prosecution authorities in Europe, who want to initiate their own cases-- into war crimes. And we not only hope, but we know that our database, our search now will be used in a future let's call it something like a Nuremberg trial.

	<p>There may be no accountability for Russia in a courtroom, but the work of traditional journalists and Bellingcat's expanding database are overwhelming Putin's propaganda.</p> <p>Scott Pelley: You have exposed a number of Russian intelligence operations, some of which involve assassins. And I wonder if you fear for your own safety.</p> <p>Eliot Higgins: You have to be careful about your own security. It's an extra level of paranoia. It doesn't kind of rule my life. But you just have to be kind of hypersensitive sometimes to certain things.</p> <p>Scott Pelley: Why take the risk? Why you?</p> <p>Eliot Higgins: If Russia is to sustain itself, it has to rule by fear. You can't just let that fear overtake you. If you're in a position to do something, if you have information, if you have the motivation and you have the strength to do it, you should do it.</p> <p>Ukraine will be the most thoroughly documented war in history. Russia says no civilians have been harmed by its forces and scenes of atrocities are staged. But Putin's defense is a throwback to a previous century. Analog denials in the age of the digital witness.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/15 New generation white supremacist killer?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2022-05-15/buffalo-shooter-new-generation-white-supremacists">https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2022-05-15/buffalo-shooter-new-generation-white-supremacists</a>
GIST	<p>ATLANTA — Bored during the early days of the pandemic, Payton Gendron logged on to the 4chan message board website to browse ironic memes and infographics that spread the idea that the white race is going extinct.</p> <p>He was soon lurking on the web's even more sinister fringes, scrolling through extremist and neo-Nazi sites that peddled conspiracy theories and anti-Black racism. It wasn't until he spotted a GIF of a man shooting a shotgun through a dark hallway, and then tracked down a livestream of the <a href="#">2019 killing of 51 people at two mosques in New Zealand</a>, that Gendron appeared to have found his calling: as a virulently racist, copycat mass shooter with a craving for notoriety.</p> <p>The white 18-year-old from Conklin, N.Y., suspected of <a href="#">killing 10 people Saturday in a Buffalo, N.Y., supermarket</a>, appears to represent a new generation of white supremacists. They are isolated and online, radicalized on internet memes and misinformation, apparently inspired by livestreams to find fame through bloodshed, much of it propelled by convoluted ideas that the white race is under threat from everything from interracial marriage to immigration.</p> <p>"Now you have this new ironic world of killers," said J.J. MacNab, a fellow at George Washington University's program on extremism. "It's a different world — just a constant flow of bad statistics, bad memes, bad lies about the people they want to hate.... That's the 4chan way: You say things that are outrageous that you don't necessarily believe — and over time you come to believe."</p> <p>Unlike the white supremacists of old — from the Ku Klux Klan to newer neo-Nazi terror groups such as the Base or the Atomwaffen Division — the new recruits to racist 4chan and 8chan forums are often teenage boys in high school, MacNab said. They act out their rage at a time of dimming economic opportunity for some young people and the changing demographics of a country they have been told no longer has a place for them.</p> <p>"They piggyback on each other's crimes and, as each one became more famous, then just absolutely made it more desirable for them to copy," MacNab said. "The joke is always: Who can beat the kill number? ... To them, it's like a video game. How do you score better than the last one?"</p> <p>Armed with a high-powered rifle scrawled with a racial epithet, the suspect broadcast his killing spree live on Twitch, a platform popular among young gamers, and published a 180-page manifesto that espoused</p>



the racist “replacement theory,” the idea that white Americans are at risk of being replaced by Jews and people of color.

Identifying as a white supremacist fascist with neo-Nazi beliefs, Gendron wrote that low white birth rates around the world represent a “crisis” and “assault” that “will ultimately result in the complete racial and cultural replacement of the European people.”

Experts say replacement theory — whose label was first coined in France by the white nationalist writer Renaud Camus in his 2011 book “Le Grand Remplacement” — has inspired a steady stream of violent racist gunmen in the United States in recent years, from the massacre at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh in 2018 to the killing of one congregant and injury of three others at a synagogue in Poway, Calif.

While Gendron ultimately was motivated by a mass killing outside the U.S. — Brenton Tarrant’s 2019 massacre of worshipers in Christchurch, New Zealand — he lauded in his manifesto the perpetrators of racially motivated massacres in the U.S. These included Dylann Roof, who killed nine Black parishioners at a church in Charleston, S.C., and Patrick Crusius, who targeted Latinos and immigrants at a Walmart in El Paso. That shooting, which killed 23 people, has been described as the deadliest attack on Latinos in modern American history.

White supremacist and far-right killers have dominated the extremist homicide totals since 2018, said Brian Levin, director of the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at Cal State San Bernardino. Over the last two years, there was a historic upward shift overall in the frequency of anti-Black hate crime across the U.S., Levin said.

“We saw a concerning historic inflectional spike in anti-Black hate crime and online invective in 2020 and 2021 with increased violence, but without the kind of multi-fatality attacks that previously accompanied such spikes, until now,” Levin said. “This shooting is an extension and return to mass acts of violence.”

The lull in hate-driven mass shootings was partly because the pandemic shut down schools, malls and places where crowds of people congregated, Levin said. But also because federal law enforcement paid closer attention to extremists on online apps such as Telegram after the El Paso shooting in 2019, said Michael Edison Hayden, senior investigative reporter with the Southern Poverty Law Center’s Intelligence Project.

Although such attacks appear to target specific communities, they are actually driven by a set of larger white power ideologies, said Kathleen Belew, assistant professor of history at the University of Chicago who studies extremism.

Belew, author of “Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America,” said racist radicalization was not a Southern or regional problem. The Buffalo attack was clearly related to racially motivated attacks in the U.S. in recent years, from the Pittsburgh synagogue to the El Paso Walmart.

“Radicalization is happening all the time around our country,” she said.

Running Gendron’s manifesto through plagiarism software, Belew found that significant chunks were lifted from the manifesto of the Christchurch shooter. But Gendron also appeared to have written portions himself, including his support for replacement theory.

“Immigrants are one threat, the presence of African Americans is another one, and Jews who are allegedly controlling these plots to eradicate the white race,” Belew said. “There’s a hyperfixation on the white birth rate and on white women having white children and the violent defense of that system.”

Although white supremacists such as Gendron may become radicalized online, they were also incited by the spectacle of the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection: “The Capitol attack was a radicalization action that

dramatically increased online activity in spaces like those the Buffalo shooter is believed to have frequented,” Belew said.

Blending the ideology of “great replacement” with ironic symbols and internet in-jokes is a key feature of a new breed of white supremacist mass shooters, Hayden said.

“Dialoguing with people, mass murder as performance is a particular phenomenon of the post-Trump era,” he said. “The manifesto is part of a performance, a physical representation, the bloodshed is taking the memes into real life.”

“These killers don’t have any perception of people being people.” Hayden said. “These are murders presented almost like video games, and they’re actually, for that reason, very, very, very scary.... That mimetic aspect of it — the internet winking and things like that — feels even a step more dehumanized and horrible.”

About 60% of the extremist killings in the U.S. between 2009 and 2019 were committed by people espousing white supremacist ideologies such as replacement theory, according to the Anti-Defamation League.

“White supremacy is the No. 1 domestic terrorism threat in the United States,” according to Heidi Beirich, co-founder of the Global Project Against Hate and Extremism based in Montgomery, Ala.

Federal law enforcement assessments and studies by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington-based think tank, Beirich said, show far-right plots and attacks have been “exponentially growing” in recent years. In the Western world, she said, the threat of extremism has shifted from Islamic extremists to “ideologically motivated racial extremists.”

But she cautioned: “Within the white supremacy world, there’s a lot of different motives.”

“It’s like he’s fused Dylann Roof’s racism into the great replacement,” Beirich said of Gendron, noting his manifesto links to race science studies and to prominent American white supremacists like Jared Taylor. “You realize this guy has immersed himself in this hodgepodge of white supremacist websites.”

Converging online, isolated young men had fewer outlets than their forebears who tend to gather in local groups and meet others in their community.

“When you have groups of people that meet regularly, you kind of have an outlet,” she said. “I think not meeting makes them more dangerous.”

While most of the killers are young males, not all of the new generation of white supremacists or extreme racists are white.

“You can have people of all different colors participate in the white supremacy rally,” MacNab said, noting that Henry “Enrique” Tarrío, the head of the Proud Boys far-right extremist group, is half Cuban, half Black and some of the Oathkeepers who showed up at the Capitol in Washington were not white.

“It’s just a weird world we live in these days,” MacNab said. “A lot of that’s back to the irony. If you’re doing what you’re doing, because you want to make liberals cry, then you’re saying things you don’t necessarily believe. And I think a lot of conservative people of color kind of got caught up in that.”

In his manifesto, Gendron presents himself as a young left-winger who evolved into a fascist, eco-fascist, populist and accelerationist bent on speeding up the collapse of established government, said Alexander Reid Ross, an adjunct professor at Portland State University and a senior fellow at the Center for Analysis of the Radical Right who read the manifesto.

“He kind of provides some reasoning for that toward the end: The left wing has admirable goals, but for that reason it will always set back progress because for him, nonwhite people, except for Asians, are intrinsically inferior, so if you try to help them, you’re impeding the success of white people,” Reid Ross said of the manifesto.

Reid Ross noticed that Gendron highlights his German and Italian roots in the manifesto, yet still believes in the “great replacement.”

“We all tend to think of great replacement as anti-immigrant,” Reid Ross said. “What this killing shows us is it’s more than that: It is targeting anybody who isn’t white. He calls them ‘replacers’ and they have to be slaughtered, expelled or killed.”

Experts who study extremism have made an effort to not circulate Gendron’s manifesto.

“Each manifesto seems to lead to another attack and another manifesto and is a radicalizing force,” Beirich said. “So it’s very important that neither the video — which presents the attack like it’s a first-person shooter game — or the manifesto be circulated because it will inspire further attacks.”

Because Gendron’s manifesto includes detailed tactical advice and instructions, she said, “it’s a plan ... actually even more dangerous than an ideological statement.”

After the Christchurch shooting in 2019, Beirich and other experts formed an advisory panel that worked with a tech company group, the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism, to more quickly remove content such as attacker manifestos and videos to avoid inspiring further attacks and retraumatizing victims.

Some online critics said those groups didn’t act fast enough to prevent Gendron’s video from being cross-posted on Facebook and other sites, where it lingered for hours. But Beirich insisted that authorities acted more swiftly. And while screenshots of portions of the manifesto are circulating online, Beirich said, all 180 pages are not widely available and “it’s not going viral within minutes” like it did with Christchurch.

While Gendron came from the nation’s extreme fringes, a significant proportion of Americans share some of his ideas. Nearly 1 in 5 Americans agree with at least two key tenets of replacement theory, according to a new poll released last week by the Associated Press and the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago.

Experts caution, however, that belief in those tenets does not necessarily make a person a full-blown believer in the theory, let alone be willing to act violently.

The poll, which surveyed 4,173 American adults, asked about two statements that capture key parts of replacement theory — that there’s an effort to deliberately replace native-born Americans with immigrants for political reasons and that native-born Americans are losing economic and political clout in the U.S.

The survey found that about 1 in 3 Americans agreed that “there is a group of people in this country who are trying to replace native-born Americans with immigrants who agree with their political views.” About 1 in 7 Americans said they “strongly” agree with that.

Late Saturday, Gendron stood in a Buffalo city courtroom, wearing a white paper gown with his hands shackled, as he was charged with one count of first-degree murder.

His court-appointed lawyer pleaded not guilty.

While Gendron probably wanted the public to focus on white genocide after the shooting, Hayden of the SPLC said they should instead focus on the rich donors who sought to profit from radicalizing Gendron and other young men.

	“There are very wealthy people in this country who are seeking to keep this radicalization material humming because it benefits them,” Hayden said. “The more chaotic the country is, the more the rich can work for themselves.”
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HEADLINE	<b>05/15 Experts: copycat mass shootings deadlier</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://wtvbam.com/2022/05/15/copycat-mass-shootings-becoming-deadlier-experts-warn-after-new-york-attack/">https://wtvbam.com/2022/05/15/copycat-mass-shootings-becoming-deadlier-experts-warn-after-new-york-attack/</a>
GIST	<p>(Reuters) – An 18-year-old white man suspected of fatally shooting 10 people in a Black neighborhood in Buffalo, New York, appears to be the latest in a line of “copycat” gunmen carrying out deadlier mass shootings inspired by previous attackers, experts warned on Sunday.</p> <p>Payton Gendron, who surrendered to police on Saturday after the attack, apparently publicized a racist manifesto on the internet and broadcast the attack in real time on social media platform Twitch, a live video service owned by Amazon.com. Authorities called the mass killing an act of “racially motivated violent extremism.”</p> <p>Experts say the trend of mostly young white men being inspired by previous racist gun massacres is on the rise, citing recent mass shootings, including the 2015 attack at a Black church in Charleston, South Carolina, a 2018 shooting at a synagogue in Pittsburgh and a 2019 attack at a Walmart in an Hispanic neighborhood of El Paso.</p> <p>Adam Lankford, a criminology professor at the University of Alabama, has studied trends in mass shootings over time. His 2020 study analyzing victim data showed that the “deadliest” shootings – where more than eight people are killed – had doubled in number since 2010, compared to the previous 40 years.</p> <p>“It’s clearly not just random. They are not people dreaming this up on their own. They are learning it from each other,” Lankford said.</p> <p>He added: “They want to be like the previous attacker, who is a role model.”</p> <p>Lankford’s study found that the “deadliest” shootings comprised 25% of mass public shootings from 1966 to 2009, but from 2010 to 2019 had increased to 50% of mass public shootings, in which there was “direct evidence that perpetrator was influenced by another specific attacker or attackers.”</p> <p>Lankford said the rise in these copycat mass killings have a specific trend: the gunmen find their inspiration from the personal life details of previous mass shooters. “It’s not repeating the incident that inspires them. It’s the intimate details of their lives that promotes the influence,” he said.</p> <p>Lankford said one way to try and combat the rise in such hate crimes is for the media to avoid publishing details of the shooters personal lives.</p> <p><b>RED FLAGS</b></p> <p>Hate-motivated mass shootings and fame-seeking perpetrators have rapidly increased since 2015, according to an analysis by The Violence Project, which tracks mass shootings in the United States.</p> <p>The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), which tracks hate and extremist groups, told Reuters on Sunday the Buffalo gunman “had a substantial online history in niche, toxic online communities.”</p> <p>“From what he wrote online, by his own account he was radicalized through participation in these forums,” Susan Corke, director of SPLC’s Intelligence Project, said in an emailed statement.</p> <p>The SPLC said that even though it had not seen any evidence yet of the gunman’s affiliation to a specific far right or racist group, there were red flags.</p>

	<p>“He discussed building up a weapons cache and asked detailed questions about body armor on a Discord channel dedicated to gun culture. He also posted about allegedly killing a cat and dismembering it. He appears to have posted detailed plans for an attack as early as two weeks ago and posted frequently after that about his planning,” Corke added.</p> <p>The SPLC said it had obtained a transcript of the suspect’s Discord chat log, adding they have “high confidence” when asked about its authenticity. Reuters could not independently authenticate the postings.</p> <p>Social media and streaming platforms like Twitch, which said it removed the stream of Saturday’s shooting after less than two minutes, have grappled with controlling violent and extremist content for years.</p> <p>The live-nature of the broadcasts make it particularly difficult to moderate as streaming platforms do not have time-delays like television broadcasts. Facebook has sought to address the livestream violence issue in 2019 after allowing 17 minutes of a livestream of a mass shooting in Christchurch, New Zealand, before taking it down. It now has a one-strike policy which temporarily restricts users after breaking a rule.</p> <p>New York Governor Kathy Hochul said on Sunday the stream should have been taken down faster and that she would take the matter up with social media platforms.</p> <p>Democratic U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi also urged social media companies to address and track down extremism on their platforms.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>05/15 Houston flea market shooting: 2 dead</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.foxnews.com/us/houston-flea-market-shooting-leaves-two-people-dead">https://www.foxnews.com/us/houston-flea-market-shooting-leaves-two-people-dead</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>Thousands of people were at a flea market in northern <a href="#">Houston</a> on Sunday afternoon when a <a href="#">gunfight</a> broke out between two groups of people, leaving two dead and at least three others wounded, according to Harris County Sheriff Ed Gonzalez.</p> <p>"For now, it appears the wounded were all likely participants in the altercation," Gonzalez said. "No innocent bystanders injured as far as we know."</p> <p>At least two pistols were recovered from the scene. The three wounded individuals were transported to a local hospital in unknown conditions.</p> <p>One suspect was also detained at the scene, Lt. Susan Cotter told reporters.</p> <p>The gunfight came on the same day as a <a href="#">shooting at a California Church</a> that left one person dead, and a day after an 18-year-old White man <a href="#">shot and killed 10 people</a> at a supermarket in a predominantly Black neighborhood in Buffalo, New York.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>05/14 GAO: deficiencies CBP drug seizure data</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/border-security/gao-finds-deficiencies-in-cbps-drug-seizure-data-and-training/">https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/border-security/gao-finds-deficiencies-in-cbps-drug-seizure-data-and-training/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>The Government Accountability Office (GAO) says U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) hasn’t assessed if the drug type categories in its data systems adequately reflect the drug smuggling scenarios that officers and agents confront. GAO’s review also found outdated training modules.</p> <p>CBP officers and agents follow a multi-step process when seizing drugs. This process includes collecting seizure data such as the drug type and concealment method in CBP data systems. CBP officials have several mechanisms to perform quality assurance efforts on drug seizure records. For example, they conduct supervisory reviews of the records for accuracy before they are finalized. CBP intelligence</p>

entities—such as field targeting and intelligence units—review seizure data in CBP data systems on a daily basis to inform their drug interdiction efforts, target drug smugglers, and monitor drug seizure trends. GAO found that the number of CBP drug seizures increased from about 65,000 in fiscal year 2016 to 99,000 in fiscal year 2021.

While CBP has various fields in its data systems for recording, analyzing, and using data on drug seizures, GAO found it has not assessed its categories for drug type to determine if they are useful for targeting and intelligence. For example, GAO found that 23 percent of total drug seizures from fiscal years 2016 through 2021 were classified in a catchall drug type category— Other drugs, prescriptions, and chemicals. CBP intelligence officials GAO spoke with who use and analyze drug seizure data stated that they have some concerns with the drug type categories available—particularly this catchall category—because the lack of specificity requires additional research, such as text searches.

GAO’s performance audit was conducted from February 2021 through May 2022. Previously, a 2021 report from the Office of Inspector General (OIG) on seizures from international mail inspected at the John F. Kennedy International Airport [raised questions](#) about CBP’s process for recording drug seizures in its data systems. The OIG review found the deficiencies were largely due to inadequate resources and guidance.

GAO has recommended that CBP assess the drug type categories available in its data systems to determine if they adequately reflect the drug smuggling scenarios encountered by officers and agents. CBP agreed and said it will plan to update the data systems, as appropriate.

GAO’s review also looked at training. Office of Field Operations (OFO) officers GAO spoke with at three of the seven ports of entry identified benefits of academy training, including learning from seasoned instructors and gaining a foundation on drug seizure processing. However, OFO officers at six of the seven ports of entry identified challenges with academy training, including insufficient training on drug seizure processing steps.

All of the CBP field officials GAO spoke with mentioned the importance of on-the-job training to learn drug seizure processing and recordation. OFO officers identified additional benefits, such as shadowing senior officers.

While CBP officers and agents are trained on the process for recording drug seizures during their academy and post-academy programs, GAO found that CBP has not evaluated its post-academy drug seizure training. Specifically, OFO and U.S. Border Patrol have not evaluated them since they implemented them in 2011 and 2006, respectively.

GAO found that OFO’s Post-Academy Program drug seizures training module is outdated. For example, one of the three learning objectives is focused on how to document a seizure. However, the training materials provide instructions on a system that is no longer in use and do not mention the modernized SEACATS, which CBP has been using to record drug seizures since May 2018. OFO and Office of Training and Development officials told GAO that as of February 2022 they are in the process of updating the program and estimated they would complete the update in fiscal year 2022. This revision will include a plan to regularly evaluate the drug seizures portions of the program.

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[Read the full report at GAO](#)

HEADLINE	05/15 Facing rise in racial violence
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/news/2022/may/15/buffalo-mass-shooting-rise-racial-violence-us">https://www.theguardian.com/news/2022/may/15/buffalo-mass-shooting-rise-racial-violence-us</a>
GIST	<p>The story is, by now, nauseatingly familiar. From Charleston to El Paso, from Pittsburgh to San Diego, and from Christchurch, New Zealand, to the latest scene of horror in Buffalo, <a href="#">New York</a>, each of these mass shootings is stitched with one common thread: white supremacy.</p> <p>As investigators begin to piece together the details of <a href="#">Saturday’s massacre at the Tops Friendly Market</a> that killed 10, the motivation of the murderer already seems in little doubt.</p>



The perpetrator appears to be a radicalized, lone white gunman, filled with racial hatred fueled by extremist theory widely available on the internet, who descended on a predominantly Black community in Buffalo, New York, heavily armed and determined to kill as many people as he could.

The suspect, Payton Gendron, 18, is said to have etched a racial insult onto the barrel of his assault rifle before he live streamed himself gunning down grocery shoppers, supermarket staff and a security guard.

Authorities said he also posted a lengthy “manifesto” to social media, with frequent references to a racist “white replacement” theory as justification for what they said was a [“hate crime and racially motivated violent extremism”](#).

Joe Biden, scores of American politicians, and community and civil rights leaders, including the [Rev Al Sharpton](#), were quick to express their outrage, calling for more to be done to tackle the rise in hate-based crime in the US.

But it’s a problem that has been getting worse in recent years, largely cultivated in the cauldron of the darkest reaches of the internet and eagerly seized upon by those all too willing to convert the skewed ideology into violence.

The FBI reported last year that hate crimes in the US had risen to the [highest level in 12 years](#), triggered largely by a surge in assaults on Black and Asian Americans. And while mass murders such as those in Buffalo and elsewhere understandably garner the most attention, many thousands of other violent hate-based attacks take place each year, leading attorney general Merrick Garland to make domestic terrorism and racially-based hate crimes [“a top priority” for the justice department](#).

“Hate and racism have no place in America,” Derrick Johnson, president of the national association for the advancement of colored people (NAACP) said in a statement following the Buffalo attack.

“We are shattered, extremely angered and praying for the victims’ families and loved ones, as well as the entire community”.

The parallels of Buffalo are significant not only to the August 2019 [murder of 21 people at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas](#), but also to countless other shootings involving a radicalized, solitary attacker.

In El Paso, the gunman, a 21-year-old white male, also posted a document online, to extremist online message board 8chan, which stated the attack in the border town was “a response to the Hispanic invasion of Texas”.

Four years earlier, an attack on a Black community church by a [self-confessed white supremacist](#) in Charleston, South Carolina, left nine dead.

In October 2018 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, a white man shouted “All Jews must die” as he burst into the Tree of Life synagogue and [shot dead 11 worshippers](#) and wounded six others. Police later found anti-Semitic social media posts from the killer.

And a similar shooting occurred at a synagogue in San Diego, California, in April 2019, when [one person died and several others were wounded](#) by a 19-year-old who also posted messages of racial hatred to 8chan.

The San Diego killer claimed he was motivated by attacks on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, a month earlier in which a white supremacist [murdered 51 Muslims](#). Investigators there quickly established the killer had been radicalized online, had posted his own manifesto of hate and live streamed the killings.

	<p>To Sharpton, the veteran civil rights activist and television host, the latest attack in Buffalo is an urgent call to action.</p> <p>“President Biden should have a White House meeting of Black, Jewish, and Asian leaders to underscore the federal government’s escalating efforts against hate crimes,” he said <a href="#">in a tweet</a>.</p> <p>“These hate crimes need to be met with a united front against hate-based violence.”</p> <p>The mayor of Buffalo, meanwhile, said on Sunday he believed the murders in his city will prove “a turning point”.</p> <p>“I would like to see sensible gun control. I would like to see ending hate speech on the internet, on social media. It is not free speech. It is not the American way,” Byron Brown said on NBC’s Meet the Press.</p> <p>“We are not a nation of haters. We are not a nation of hate. We need to send the message that there is no place on the internet for hate speech, for hate indoctrination, for spreading hate manifestos.</p> <p>“I will be a stronger voice for that. I believe that what happened in Buffalo, New York, yesterday is going to be a turning point. I think it’s going to be different after this, in terms of the energy and the activity that we see”.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/15 Gunman opens fire Southern Calif. church</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/15/us/california-church-shooting-laguna-woods.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/15/us/california-church-shooting-laguna-woods.html</a>
GIST	<p>A gunman who opened fire inside a Southern California church on Sunday, killing one person and critically wounding four others, was overpowered by congregants who then hogtied him, preventing further bloodshed, the authorities said.</p> <p>The shooting occurred at 1:26 p.m. inside the <a href="#">Geneva Presbyterian Church</a> in Laguna Woods, Calif., about 50 miles southeast of Los Angeles in a community largely made up of retirees and one that has a <a href="#">well-established</a> Asian community.</p> <p>Most of the victims were of Taiwanese descent, though officials were still investigating if they had been targeted, said Carrie Braun, a spokeswoman for the Orange County Sheriff’s Department. A motive for the shooting was not immediately clear.</p> <p>Four of the victims were in critical condition, she said, and another victim was being treated for minor injuries. The person who was killed was found inside the church by the authorities, she said. Further details on the conditions of those hospitalized were not immediately available; the Sheriff’s Department described them as four Asian men ranging in age from 66 to 92 and an 86-year-old Asian woman.</p> <p>The gunman, an Asian man in his 60s, fired inside the church while the members ate lunch after a morning service, Undersheriff Jeff Hallock of the Orange County Sheriff’s Department said at a news conference.</p> <p>A group of churchgoers overpowered the gunman, hogtied him with an extension cord and confiscated two weapons, he said.</p> <p>“That group of churchgoers displayed what we believe is exceptional heroism and bravery in interfering, in intervening, to stop the suspect,” Undersheriff Hallock said. “They undoubtedly prevented additional injuries and fatalities.”</p> <p>He added that investigators do not believe the gunman lives in the city of Laguna Woods, which was incorporated in 1999.</p>

The authorities are interviewing more than 30 people who were inside the church during the shooting. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives said on Twitter that it was helping with the investigation.

In a series of text messages on Sunday, the Rev. Albany Lee, who presides over the Irvine Taiwanese Presbyterian Church, which is housed on the campus of the Geneva Presbyterian Church, said that congregants told him that the gunman “was a new face.”

“No one recognizes the shooter,” Mr. Lee said, adding that when a receptionist asked the gunman who he was, “he said he was here before.”

Mr. Lee said that the person who subdued the gunman was a pastor who led the services on Sunday. That pastor, who was not injured, had “subdued the shooter before he loaded another round of bullets,” he said. “Thank God,” he added.

Cynthia Conners, the mayor pro tem in Laguna Woods, said that she has been a member of the church since 2006 and had attended services on Sunday morning. Ms. Conners, who left the church at about noon, said that the Taiwanese congregation shares the church space.

The church is in a peaceful retirement community in a safe neighborhood, said Charlotte Hsieh, the organist for the church. “I could not even imagine something like this could happen here,” she said. “I’m just as shocked as anybody.”

Lisa Bartlett, an Orange County supervisor, said at the news conference that “today is a very dark day.”

She noted that the church shooting had come just a day after “the tragic and hate-filled actions that led to the senseless deaths” in [Buffalo](#), where almost all of the 10 people who were shot and killed were Black.

Representative Katie Porter, the Democratic member of Congress who represents Orange County, described the news as disturbing, especially given the shooting in Buffalo. “This should not be our new normal,” she said.

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HEADLINE	<b>05/15 Grief, anger sweep through Buffalo NY</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/15/nyregion/shooting-buffalo-ny#buffalo-attack-shooting-victims">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/15/nyregion/shooting-buffalo-ny#buffalo-attack-shooting-victims</a>
GIST	<p>BUFFALO — A day after one of the deadliest racist massacres in recent American history, law enforcement officials in New York descended on the home of the accused gunman and probed disturbing hints into his behavior, as Gov. Kathy Hochul promised action on hate speech that she said spreads “like a virus.”</p> <p>The suspect, Payton S. Gendron, 18, shot 13 people on Saturday afternoon at a Tops supermarket in east Buffalo, killing 10, officials said. Almost all the victims were Black — shoppers, grocery workers and a security guard bound together by little more than tragic happenstance.</p> <p>But Mr. Gendron picked his target carefully, the police said, choosing an area known for its large Black population and even visiting the neighborhood the day before the attack in what authorities described as “reconnaissance.”</p> <p>And nearly a year before the mass shooting, his words had already caused alarm elsewhere.</p> <p>The police said on Sunday that Mr. Gendron had been picked up at his high school last June by state police after making a threatening remark and had been taken to a hospital for a mental health evaluation.</p> <p>Responding to a question for a class project about his post-graduation plans, Mr. Gendron said his involved a murder-suicide, a law enforcement official familiar with the case said.</p>

But Mr. Gendron described the remark as a joke, the official said. And after the evaluation, which lasted about a day and a half, he was released, according to Joseph Gramaglia, the Buffalo police commissioner.

That account was confirmed by Special Agent Steven Belongia of the F.B.I., who said that Mr. Gendron was “not on the radar” of federal authorities.

Mr. Gendron, who the police said wore body armor and camouflage during his spree, is believed to have posted a lengthy screed riddled with racist writings and expressing admiration for a [white supremacist ideology](#) known as replacement theory, as well as for gunmen in other racist mass shootings.

“This individual came here with the express purpose of taking as many Black lives as he could,” said Mayor Byron Brown, a Democrat who is Buffalo’s first Black mayor.

The White House announced that President Biden and Jill Biden, the first lady, will visit Buffalo on Tuesday “to grieve with the community that lost 10 lives in a senseless and horrific mass shooting.” On Sunday night, the police identified the victims — a cross-section of a working-class neighborhood where the Tops store acted as both a crucial source of groceries and a community hub.

The dead included a retired Buffalo police officer, Aaron Salter Jr., 55, who worked at the grocery store as a security guard and was being hailed as a hero for confronting the gunman, and Ruth Whitfield, an 86-year-old grandmother of eight. Some died running errands: Celestine Chaney, 65, for example, who simply wanted to get strawberries to make shortcakes, or Roberta Drury, 32, who was just getting food for dinner. Heyward Patterson, 67, was killed helping to put groceries into another shopper’s car.

Four people were shot in the store’s parking lot and nine others inside, including Mr. Salter: He exchanged shots with the gunman, who was firing an assault weapon and protected by heavy body armor, according to Mark Poloncarz, the Erie County executive.

On Sunday, a patch of blood still stained the parking lot’s asphalt, as a range of state, federal and local officers worked the scene. The blocks surrounding the site were filled with elected officials and neighborhood mourners.

“A lot of my peers, my friends, the cop, they were in there,” said Karen Martin, 64, who came to the store on Sunday morning to pay her respects. “I just don’t believe that he did that.”

The sense of grief was also mixed with outrage. Local Black religious leaders pleaded with their white brethren in other parts of the state and country to do their part to counter racism and white supremacy.

“Don’t tell me you’re a friend of our community and you don’t address this today at your pulpit,” said Bishop Darius Pridgen of the True Bethel Baptist Church in Buffalo, adding, “If you do not stand behind those holy desks and acknowledge that there are still people who hate Black people, you can go to hell with the shooter for all I care. Because at the end of the day, if you’re silent right now, you are not a friend of mine.”

The attack on Saturday was the deadliest mass shooting in the United States this year, joining a grim roster of other racist massacres in recent years, including the killing of nine Black parishioners at a church in Charleston, S.C., in 2015; an antisemitic rampage in the Tree of Life synagogue in 2018 in Pittsburgh that left 11 people dead; and an attack at a Walmart in El Paso in 2019, where the man charged had expressed hatred of Latinos and killed more than 20 people.

Extremists motivated by racial and ethnic hatred are considered the most dangerous threat among domestic terrorists. After a spate of horrific shootings targeting people of color and Jews in 2019, the F.B.I. elevated the threat to the highest level, meaning agents must prioritize developing confidential informants and take other steps to counter the violence.

Law enforcement officials said that Mr. Gendron, who has been charged with first-degree murder and pleaded not guilty on Saturday night, had traveled halfway across the state to commit his crime. The document he is believed to have written and posted online in the days leading up to the attack had mentioned that Buffalo was the nearest city to his home in the Southern Tier — a predominantly white region that runs along New York’s southern border with Pennsylvania — that had a major Black population.

On Sunday morning, F.B.I. agents and members of other law enforcement agencies gathered in front of Mr. Gendron’s home in Conklin, N.Y., a suburban town with rolling hills in the southern part of Broome County, about a 200-mile drive from Buffalo.

Neighbors there recalled watching Mr. Gendron play basketball in the driveway with his siblings, and some even had attended his front-yard high school graduation party last year, where they said there was no indication of trouble.

Others, however, said that there were signs of rebellion and odd behavior, including a moment after in-person schooling resumed when he wore a full hazmat suit to class.

“He wore the entire suit: boots, gloves, everything,” said Nathan Twitchell, 19, a former classmate at Susquehanna Valley High School.

Kolton Gardner, 18, of Conklin, who attended middle school and high school with Mr. Gendron, described him as “definitely a little bit of an outcast.”

“I knew he had an interest in guns, but where we grew up that wasn’t uncommon,” Mr. Gardner said.

That interest was apparently avid enough to encourage a purchase: Robert Donald, the owner of Vintage Firearms in Endicott, N.Y., said Sunday that he recently sold a Bushmaster assault weapon to Mr. Gendron.

“I just can’t believe it. I don’t understand why an 18-year-old would even do this,” said Mr. Donald, 75, who primarily sells collectible firearms. “I know I didn’t do anything wrong, but I feel terrible about it.”

Mr. Gendron’s writings were littered with racist, anti-immigrant views that claimed white Americans were at risk of being replaced by immigrants or people of color, once-fringe ideas that have been given a fuller airing in recent years by some [prominent conservative commentators](#).

On the far right, the theory, which sometimes blames Jews for fomenting the “great replacement,” has been tied to gunmen in several other mass shootings as well as the 2017 right-wing rally in Charlottesville, Va. that [devolved into violence](#).

At a midday news conference on Sunday, Mr. Gramaglia, the police commissioner, said that state and federal authorities had sought warrants for information about Mr. Gendron’s digital activities. They pursued access to his computers and phones, as well as searches of his home and vehicle. He added that authorities believed that Mr. Gendron acted alone.

He was placed on suicide watch and separated from the general population at the Erie County Holding Center, said John Garcia, the Erie County sheriff, who refused to say the suspect’s name — referring to him by his inmate identification number — and called his actions “pure evil.”

Mr. Gendron surrendered after putting his weapon to his chin, said Mr. Gramaglia, who praised his officers for their fast response to the shooting. Still, some community members wondered how Mr. Gendron — who authorities said had two other guns in the car he drove to the massacre — had not been shot by police during his attack, something they said would have happened had he been Black.

On Sunday, however, Mr. Gramaglia rebutted this suggestion, saying that his officers always worked to de-escalate violent situations. “We’re not looking to shoot anyone,” he said, noting that Mr. Gendron had pointed the gun at himself, not police.

Mr. Gendron live-streamed his attack, the police said, capturing the images of chaos he caused with a camera affixed to his helmet. The video was broadcast on Twitch, a livestreaming site owned by Amazon that is popular with gamers, though the site took the channel offline almost immediately after the attack started. Still, images of the broadcast could still be found online; a snippet of the video of the shooting was viewed more than three million times on a site called Streamable before it was removed.

At a morning appearance at the True Bethel church, Ms. Hochul, a Democrat who is a Buffalo native, said she was angry at the violence that had shaken her hometown, calling the gunman “a coward.” But she also expressed deep frustration with “the social media platforms that allow this hatred to ferment and spread like a virus.”

When pressed on how she planned to confront such hate speech online, without impinging on First Amendment rights, Ms. Hochul noted that “hate speech is not protected” and said she would soon be calling meetings with social media companies.

“I assure you when I get back to Albany, their phones will ring,” she said.

Along with other Buffalo residents, Ms. Hochul stressed that she wanted the city to be known as a turning point in the nation’s string of gun tragedies.

“I want them to talk about Buffalo,” she said, “as the last place this ever happened.”

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HEADLINE	<b>05/15 Before massacre: erratic behavior, threat</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/15/nyregion/gunman-buffalo-shooting-suspect.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/15/nyregion/gunman-buffalo-shooting-suspect.html</a>
GIST	<p>Last spring, as the end of the academic year approached at Susquehanna Valley High School outside Binghamton, N.Y., students were asked for a school project about their plans after graduation.</p> <p>Payton Gendron, a senior, said he wanted to commit a murder-suicide, according to a law enforcement official briefed on the matter.</p> <p>He claimed to be joking, the official said. But the state police were summoned to investigate and took Mr. Gendron, then 17, into custody on June 8 under a state mental health law, police officials said Sunday.</p> <p>He had a psychiatric evaluation in a hospital but was released within a couple of days, the officials said. Two weeks later, Mr. Gendron graduated and fell off investigators’ radar.</p> <p>On Saturday, he resurfaced 200 miles away in Buffalo, where the authorities say he opened fire at a supermarket in a predominantly Black area, <a href="#">killing 10 people</a> and wounding three others in <a href="#">one of the deadliest racist massacres</a> in recent United States history.</p> <p>After his rampage, Mr. Gendron put his gun to his neck. But two officers persuaded him to drop his weapon and surrender.</p> <p>He was charged Saturday with first-degree murder, and as he awaited his fate in jail, investigators were sifting through his past to piece together how he transformed from a quiet student to an accused killer without drawing more serious scrutiny.</p> <p>New York State has what is known as a <a href="#">red flag law</a>, under which people found to be a danger can be forced to surrender their guns, but no one tried to invoke it against Mr. Gendron. The state police said he had not named a specific target in his threat to kill someone.</p>

But the episode came after what former classmates said was a pattern of increasingly bizarre behavior by Mr. Gendron. Two former classmates said he showed up to class in hazmat gear after pandemic restrictions were lifted in 2020.

“He wore the entire suit, boots, gloves, everything,” Nathan Twitchell, 19, said as he stood on his porch in Binghamton, shaking his head. “Everyone was just staring at him.”

That was one of the few times students saw Mr. Gendron, said Cassaundra Williams, another student at the high school. Ms. Williams, 19, said Mr. Gendron favored online coursework even as his classmates returned to campus.

“He was always very quiet and never much said anything,” said Ms. Williams, who added that Mr. Gendron was “book smart” but had grown more reclusive over the years since she met him in elementary school.

“We were just so shocked. We can’t even wrap our heads around it still,” she said.

F.B.I. agents and other law officers gathered Sunday morning outside Mr. Gendron’s family home in Conklin, a town of about 5,000 people.

There was little movement at the light-blue, two-story house with black shutters and neatly trimmed shrubs, save for agents pacing the driveway. Three neighbors stood closely together down the block, arms folded. Some recalled watching Mr. Gendron play basketball in the driveway with his two brothers, and some even had attended his front-yard graduation party last year.

Mr. Gendron’s mother did not respond to a message left on Sunday afternoon. Nor did the lawyer who represented Mr. Gendron at his arraignment, Brian Parker.

Ms. Williams said the last time she had seen Mr. Gendron was at graduation. She said she was shocked when a friend texted her after the shooting Saturday to tell her that Mr. Gendron had been arrested.

“He was just a quiet, smart kid that I wouldn’t think would be able to do anything like what he did yesterday,” said Mr. Twitchell. “It just blows my mind.”

Kolton Gardner, 18, who attended middle school and high school with Mr. Gendron, described him as “definitely a little bit of an outcast.”

“He just wasn’t that social,” Mr. Gardner said. “I knew he had an interest in guns, but where we grew up that wasn’t uncommon. That’s just kind of the thing in rural New York, people like guns.”

Mr. Gendron’s fascination with guns went beyond the casual. Law enforcement officials said he plotted the attack over several months and posted a 180-page manifesto online explaining why he committed the shootings and describing his meticulous preparations. In it, he wrote extensively about the pros and cons of various firearms.

The document includes a question-and-answer section, charts of data that lend a pseudoscientific air and pages of racist and antisemitic memes — as well as his thoughts on cryptocurrency.

He wrote of his admiration for previous mass killers and said that he took as a particular inspiration the man responsible for a 2019 mosque massacre in Christchurch, New Zealand.

One of many unanswered questions posed by Mr. Gendron’s rampage is why his grim response about his post-graduation plans did not lead to further intervention beyond the mental-health exam.



Under New York State's red flag law, enacted in 2019, anyone who believes that someone may be a threat to themselves or others can ask a judge to issue an "extreme risk protection order" that prevents the person from purchasing or possessing a firearm. The law is not used often.

The law enforcement official who had been briefed on the school project said that in New York, there are hundreds of school threats called in each year, and that in each case, authorities interview the students and their parents to determine whether students have actual access to guns. The authorities then try to make a reasoned call.

In any case, Mr. Gendron was not on any red-flag list when he entered Vintage Firearms in Endicott, N.Y., and bought the Bushmaster semiautomatic rifle that the police say he used in the shooting.

Robert Donald, the owner of the store, confirmed that his records showed he had sold the gun to Mr. Gendron, but said he did not remember the young man at all, even though he said he sells only a half-dozen or so of this type of gun in a year.

Mr. Donald, 75, who has owned the shop since 1993 and primarily sells collectible firearms, said he was shocked when federal investigators contacted him Saturday to inquire about Mr. Gendron, who Mr. Donald said had bought the gun within the last few months.

Mr. Donald said he did a background check on Mr. Gendron before he sold him the gun. The report showed nothing. "He didn't stand out, because if he did, I would have never sold him the gun," Mr. Donald said.

Mr. Gendron wrote that he modified the gun with his father's power drill, using a parts kit that retails for \$60. Mr. Donald said that when he sold Mr. Gendron the firearm, its design complied with state law banning military-style features.

"Even with all of those safety features on it — which is the only way I sell it — any gun can be easily modified if you really want to do it," he said.

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HEADLINE	05/13 Spokane: major seizure meth, fentanyl
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.krem.com/article/news/crime/spokane-law-enforcement-fbi-execute-methamphetamine-fentanyl-guns/293-5a63ae59-0071-4435-88eb-2811898d84b9">https://www.krem.com/article/news/crime/spokane-law-enforcement-fbi-execute-methamphetamine-fentanyl-guns/293-5a63ae59-0071-4435-88eb-2811898d84b9</a>
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. — Approximately 35 pounds of methamphetamine, 50,000 fake pills believed to contain fentanyl and seven guns were seized by law enforcement as part of an ongoing drug trafficking investigation.</p> <p>According to Vanessa R. Waldref, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Washington, this investigation was a joint effort by the Spokane DEA Task Force, Spokane Police Department Special Investigations Unit and the FBI Safe Streets Task Force.</p> <p>One person has been arrested and booked for obstruction of justice. That person's identity has yet to be revealed.</p> <p>Waldref commended all parties involved in the joint investigation.</p> <p>"Yesterday's seizures took a large amount of potentially lethal narcotics off the street, along with a number of guns that appear to have been connected to the drug trade," Waldref said. "One fentanyl-laced pill can kill, so this seizure likely saved dozens, if not hundreds, of lives in the Spokane area. When it comes to investigating cases like this, it is truly a force multiplier to have DEA, FBI, Spokane PD, and our task forces working together seamlessly to seize these poison pills, protect the community, and keep Eastern Washington safe and strong. I commend and thank everyone involved in yesterday's operation."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/15 Lakewood police: road rage shooting</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article261465587.html">https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article261465587.html</a>
GIST	<p>A passenger in a vehicle was shot Saturday night in Lakewood following what police believe was an incident of road rage.</p> <p>Lakewood Police Chief Mike Zaro said a woman was taken to an area hospital where she is expected to survive her injuries.</p> <p>Around 9 p.m., police were dispatched to a report of a shooting. Social media images show that police first responded to the Towne Center shopping area, but later learned that it happened at a nearby intersection.</p> <p>Police think the shooting from one vehicle into another happened in the area of 100th Street Southwest and Gravelly Lake Drive Southwest, Zaro said.</p> <p>Police are still investigating, he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/15 Child porn probe: man peed in milkshakes</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/nation-world/national/article261464192.html">https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/nation-world/national/article261464192.html</a>
GIST	<p>A child porn investigation took another disgusting turn when Vancouver police officers found a video of a man peeing in milkshake mix at an Arby's restaurant, Washington authorities reported.</p> <p>The man, a night manager at the restaurant, told police he urinated in the milkshake mix for sexual gratification at least twice, Vancouver police said in a news release.</p> <p>Police found no indication that Arby's or other employees were aware of the incidents.</p> <p>"The alleged actions of the former franchised employee are abhorrent and unacceptable," an Arby's spokesperson said in a statement to KTTV. "We have taken immediate action with the franchise group who terminated the former employee and is fully cooperating with the authorities in their investigation."</p> <p>Investigators are seeking anyone who bought a milkshake at the 221 NE 104th Ave. restaurant on Oct. 30 or Oct. 31, the release said.</p> <p>They ask that anyone with a receipt or verified transaction information contact detective Robert Givens at <a href="mailto:robert.givens@cityofvancouver.us">robert.givens@cityofvancouver.us</a>.</p> <p>Another Arby's manager told police the restaurant sold at least one ice cream float and 30 to 40 milkshakes Oct. 30, The Columbian reported.</p> <p>Detectives in a child porn investigation contacted the man May 10, the release said. He admitted downloading and distributing child pornography, police said.</p> <p>A search of his phone and other digital devices uncovered "dozens of photos and videos depicting the sexual exploitation of children," the release said.</p> <p>The search also uncovered a video of the man urinating in milkshake mix containers, police said.</p> <p>The man faces charges of possessing and distributing child pornography and assault, the release said.</p> <p>Detectives are still investigating his digital devices.</p> <p>Vancouver is a city of 195,000 people just north of Portland, Oregon.</p>

HEADLINE	<b>05/15 Fraud stole \$billions from jobless benefits</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/us-policy/2022/05/15/unemployment-pandemic-fraud-identity-theft/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/us-policy/2022/05/15/unemployment-pandemic-fraud-identity-theft/</a>
GIST	<p>Sareena Brown-Thomas had just arrived home from her shift as a custodian when she noticed an envelope in the mail from the D.C. government. Bearing her name, address and the last four digits of her Social Security number, the letter inside said she had been awarded unemployment benefits — a problem, she later recalled, since she had never applied for them.</p> <p>The 32-year-old soon notified her bosses, believing last summer that she had put the matter to rest. But the real trouble wouldn't start until September: When Brown-Thomas did actually find herself out of a job, she couldn't get the financial support she needed. Mired in bureaucratic battles, she said she faced a months-long struggle just to prove her identity to the city.</p> <p>"I'm still trying to figure out how to get a lot of stuff paid," Brown-Thomas, who warred at one point with D.C. over her eligibility, said in an interview this spring. "It was so easy for them to use my Social Security number to get unemployment."</p> <p>Brown-Thomas is part of a sprawling community of victims caught up in a massive series of attacks targeting the nation's generous coronavirus aid programs. The more than \$5 trillion approved since the start of the pandemic has become a wellspring for criminal activity, allowing fraudsters to siphon money away from hard-hit American workers and businesses who needed the help most.</p> <p>The exact scope of the fraud targeting federal aid initiatives is unknown, even two years later. With unemployment benefits, however, the theft could be significant. Testifying at a little-noticed congressional hearing this spring, a top watchdog for the Labor Department estimated there could have been "at least" \$163 billion in unemployment-related "overpayments," a projection that includes wrongly paid sums as well as "significant" benefits obtained by malicious actors.</p> <p>So far, the United States has recaptured just over \$4 billion of that, according to state workforce data furnished by the Labor Department this March. That amounts to roughly 2.4 percent of the wrongful payments, if the government's best estimate is accurate, raising the specter that Washington may never get most of the money back.</p> <p>In many cases, the criminals stole the unemployment funds using real Americans' personal information. They bombarded states with applications filed in the names of actual workers or people in prison — sometimes to such a degree that, in the case of Maryland, fraudulent claims came to outnumber real requests for help, according to state correspondence reviewed by The Washington Post.</p> <p>Criminals employed tools known as botnets to fire off thousands of applications, federal officials say, often with a single computer click. And they openly swapped tips for defrauding the government on popular websites and apps, including the messaging service Telegram. That has continued this year, as research showed at least two dozen groups with nearly 200,000 members openly discussed ways to avert states' defenses and siphon funds just over an eight-week period in March and April.</p> <p>The tactics are laid bare in a wide array of federal documents, congressional testimonies, technical reports and court filings, as well as interviews with roughly two dozen government officials and outside experts. Some of the malicious actors potentially even avoided detection, at least for a time, after the Labor Department refused to supply information needed to assist federal fraud investigations — a hurdle the White House intervened to resolve last year.</p> <p>The troubles date to the earliest days of the pandemic, when roughly a million Americans were being thrust out of work daily. Congress responded with a series of massive rescue packages, which greatly augmented the jobless aid available nationally. Totalling nearly \$900 billion, according to the Labor Department, the federal funds helped blunt the toll of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, allowing families to keep their homes and pay their bills.</p>

But the aid quickly emerged as a ripe target for fraudsters, who found novel ways to exploit the nation's under-resourced state unemployment agencies. In recent months, a wide array of state and federal law-enforcement agencies have sprung into action, training their sights on domestic criminals and gangs, as well as sophisticated networks based in Nigeria, Russia and Eastern Europe. The White House, meanwhile, has embarked on a broader effort to close the gaps in the nation's unemployment program — and ensure that other federal aid can't be targeted in the same way again.

“The unprecedented explosion of unemployment claims, combined with years of disinvestment in our unemployment system, lack of state-by-state data sharing and weak identity controls, created a perfect storm for the fraud and identity theft in 2020 that we inherited,” Gene Sperling, a top adviser to President Biden who oversees pandemic spending, acknowledged in a statement.

### **‘Large-scale fraud’**

The troubles plaguing the nation's unemployment insurance program are part of a familiar pattern: In the face of an unprecedented crisis, federal officials consistently chose haste over precision, dispatching aid with uncharacteristic speed to save the economy — even at the risk of costly mistakes.

Beginning in March 2020, Democrats and Republicans aimed to provide historic economic support for the torrent of workers unexpectedly thrust from their jobs. Lawmakers expanded the size of the benefits — at one point providing an extra \$600 per week — while extending the amount of time that out-of-work Americans could receive the aid. Congress also created a program to provide financial help to those who drive for Uber, deliver for DoorDash or otherwise participate in the “gig economy” — a category of self-employed laborers who traditionally are not eligible for unemployment insurance.

Americans rushed to take advantage of the financial lifeline, overwhelming the state workforce agencies that administer unemployment insurance programs, typically with minimal involvement from Washington. Massive delays soon left millions without pay, even as states relaxed some paperwork requirements. Amid that chaos, fraudsters soon gained a foothold.

The first signs of widespread trouble came in May 2020, when the Secret Service issued an alert about “large-scale fraud” targeting North Carolina, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Oklahoma, Wyoming and likely other states. The bulletin said the suspects, based in Nigeria, had harnessed personal information stolen from government officials, school employees and others to obtain benefits under their names. Law enforcement would eventually trace the operation to a syndicate called Scattered Canary, a notorious Nigerian crime ring associated with romance scams and other nefarious online activity.

In the months to come, the fraud would metastasize.

In California, state officials acknowledged in October 2021 that they may have paid out more than \$20 billion in undeserved unemployment payments to criminals. That included at least \$810 million that had been wrongly paid to applicants whose information matched the names of people in prison, a population ineligible for unemployment aid, according to a separate report from the [state's auditor](#). Officials at California's top labor agency declined to comment.

In Michigan, a team of state-hired [consultants](#) in December projected that they had paid out as much as \$8.5 billion in benefits to malicious actors. Arizona [said it](#) may have sent \$4 billion in checks to criminals. And Pennsylvania conceded this year that fraud appeared to have resulted in the theft of nearly \$8 billion. (Those figures are each local estimates, which in some case include state funds and are computed differently than the federal government's projections.)

The harm extended beyond state coffers. In Philadelphia, Natalis Perez first filed for unemployment insurance in July 2020, after her concerns about infection forced her to leave a job at a local food processing plant. But the 27-year-old soon learned that someone else had already filed a claim in her name — a likely sign of fraud that she soon reported to authorities.

The discovery set off 18 months of unreturned calls and bureaucratic haggles, Perez said, as she labored to prove her identity and collect the money she was owed. She ultimately contacted Philadelphia Legal Assistance, a legal aid group, at the end of last year. The unemployment support finally arrived in January — far too late for Perez to put the money to use to address the financial crunch posed by the pandemic. “It affected me a lot because I stopped paying my bills,” she said in a recent interview. “I have a lot of debts now ... I had to move because I couldn’t pay my rent.”

Alex Peterson, a spokesman for the Pennsylvania Department for Labor and Industry, acknowledged the state initially lacked the staff to process a historic surge in applications for benefits. He added in a statement that resource constraints also affected the office’s work to solve complex issues around claims in a timely matter, though he noted that Pennsylvania had sought to ramp up its work to better verify workers’ identities.

Citing the “record demand” for aid, Peterson added that “it’s no surprise there were also unprecedented levels of fraud.”

The Labor Department’s top watchdog [initially feared](#) about \$87 billion in wrongful unemployment payments nationally, with much of it concentrated in fraud. But some of the government’s tallies suffer from severe gaps, since states report only the investigations they have completed, often on a significant delay. More recently, the agency has said the number could be twice as high: The inspector general has estimated \$163 billion in unemployment-related waste, after surveying a sample of federal spending data and applying it to the total pot of money that the government doled out during the pandemic. Unveiling its staggering findings earlier this year, the agency watchdog warned it’s likely to be an undercount, too.

“It’s obviously substantial,” Roy Dotson, the national pandemic fraud recovery coordinator at the U.S. Secret Service, said in a recent interview. “I can’t really get into the number ... we’re all trying to figure that out.”

The extent of the caper is laid bare in states including Maryland, where a top official warned Congress this spring that the state had “received more fraudulent claims than honest and deserving ones,” according to a letter sent by the state’s secretary of labor, Tiffany Robinson, to federal lawmakers.

Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan (R) [first revealed](#) in July 2020 that a criminal scheme had siphoned more than \$500 million from the state’s unemployment program. Since then, the attacks have only intensified. In March, for example, an unknown entity impersonating the Maryland Department of Labor sent emails asking existing unemployment beneficiaries to verify their identities. This time, the scam preyed on the state’s work to combat fraud — just to perpetuate more of it.

“What’s astonishing is we continue to see these attacks on our customers every single day,” Robinson said.

#### **‘A magnet for rip-off artists’**

The tsunami of fraud came as little surprise to labor experts, who had been warning about neglect and mismanagement for years.

Many states “started the pandemic with a 50-year low in administrative funding,” recalled Michele Evermore, a deputy director at the Office of Unemployment Modernization at the Labor Department. That meant the governments “weren’t well resourced in the first place,” even before they were tasked to implement major new, high-demand stimulus programs.

Once those mandates arrived, it took only a few short weeks before a top federal watchdog agency saw reason for urgent action. In its [April 2020 report](#), the inspector general for the Labor Department warned that the “substantial increase” in federal benefits could place immense strain on the underfunded state operations, opening the door for expansive criminal activity.

“Those outdated systems are just a magnet for rip-off artists and the fraudsters,” said Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), a longtime advocate for tech fixes, recalling the early red flags.

The agency watchdog also cited “longstanding concerns” about poor staffing and low budgets in the state workforce agencies, and raised the alarm about computer systems running on decades-old technologies. And the inspector general further called attention to the special new program to aid gig-economy workers: Unlike traditional unemployment insurance, which vets applicants’ work histories, the new initiative crafted by Congress did not require applicants to provide similar documentation. The approach helped states distribute checks quickly — yet opened the door for waves of abuse.

“We’ve seen states where literally as many as 3 out of 4 claims into [the program] were highly suspicious and likely fraudulent,” said Jon Coss, the vice president of risk, fraud and compliance at Thomson Reuters, which helps states verify applicants. He declined to specify the states.

The inspector general declined to comment.

Beyond the mere design of the programs, the government faced the further challenge of identity theft. Years of major cyber breaches — including the 2017 theft of data from the credit monitoring agency Equifax — offered fertile ground for criminals to mine Americans’ personal lives and put it to use to pursue federal benefits.

“It’s scary that someone knows your address and Social Security number, and all this stuff, and it makes you wonder what else they might be doing with it,” said Rebecca Dixon, the leader of the National Employment Law Project, which advocates for the expansion of unemployment benefits.

Dixon wasn’t speaking hypothetically: She herself had been the victim of identity theft, as scammers used her information to apply for benefits in the nation’s capital. The longtime labor expert only discovered the issue once a debit card was sent unexpectedly to her house last year.

“It’s a symptom of a bigger and more global problem of private companies not keeping our data safe,” Dixon said.

A spokesman for the D.C. Department of Employment Services did not respond to a request for comment.

With valuable personal data in hand, some fraudsters plotted openly on apps, including Telegram. They swapped their credentials and tips for defrauding the federal government in a wide array of channels, including one dedicated to targeting the Utah unemployment system that alone attracted 16,000 subscribers. The hub offered to “teach” users how make money and “sell all tools” needed for the heist — and contained a slew of photos that purported to depict real Americans’ full checking and routing numbers. They spoke in code about “sauce,” a sort of digital tradecraft for deceiving states and stealing their funds.

A spokesman for Telegram declined an interview request, noting in a statement it is “working to expand both our Terms of Service and moderation efforts to explicitly restrict and more effectively combat other misuses.” Before The Post could highlight the specific channels, or reach out to their owners for comment, the company appeared to remove some of them, including one focused on Maryland.

“They’re advertising on Telegram as of this morning how they’re stealing benefits from the state of California,” said Haywood Talcove, the chief executive officer of the government business at Lexis Nexis, during an interview in late March. Talcove, whose company works with nearly two dozen states to verify applicants, shared screenshots of one such channel called “UI LOAN SAUCE HUB,” which since has been removed.

“They’re showing the money from the bank into their account,” he said.



Yet roughly two dozen other, similar channels remain active and popular on the service, according to data furnished in early April by Gary Warner, the director of threat intelligence at the cybersecurity firm DarkTower. Over a 60-day period in March and April, more than 200,000 users in an assortment of groups openly exchanged intelligence for the best states to target for unemployment-related fraud, the analysis shows.

Some criminals submitted the same fraudulent applications to multiple states, seizing on the lack of a single, central and mandatory repository for national employment data. Dotson, who oversees pandemic fraud work for the Secret Service, said criminals also purchased or created bots to do the work for them — relying on automated technology to fire off “literally thousands or hundreds of thousands of applications at one time.” He declined to name states.

Caught flat footed, states including Pennsylvania and Washington ultimately took [drastic steps](#) at the height of the pandemic, even pausing the delivery of much-needed benefits to ferret out fraudsters. California at one point shut down even legitimate applicants’ accounts to investigate the claims, denying aid to thousands caught up in its enforcement efforts. Others implemented tougher technology checks, requiring millions of recipients to verify their identities by submitting photos or using facial recognition software.

But the combination of old technology and newer, flawed digital remedies often carried consequences, too. Few states struggled as much as Florida: Years of failed technology upgrades and political neglect left millions of out-of-work residents waiting weeks just to obtain their first payments. A year into the crisis, the Sunshine State faced further setbacks after hackers broke into its unemployment program, potentially stealing names, addresses and Social Security numbers from more than 57,000 accounts.

The well-documented woes of the system created headaches for Terri Yearby, a single mom from Port Orange who had collected benefits until she returned to work in January. In April, though, she learned someone may have been receiving benefits in her name for weeks.

In a bid to understand the problem, Yearby tried at the time to log on to the state’s unemployment portal but discovered she had been locked out. Florida informed her that she had to verify her identity through [ID.me](#), a firm that provides facial recognition tools and other digital checks to help states vet benefit applicants. But it took 11 days of failed attempts, emails and phone calls before Yearby could prove she was actually herself — at which point she saw someone had been collecting checks and routing them to a bank account other than her own.

Yearby filed a police report, spoke with bank representatives and froze her credit in response, according to correspondence with the state and ID.me as well as other documents she later shared with The Post. Yet she still received a federal form this year that counted the roughly \$3,700 in fraudulent benefits as her own income — potentially subjecting her to taxes for aid she never actually received. She said it took roughly a year for her just to get Florida to review her case file formally, which came several weeks after The Post inquired about Yearby’s case. She is still awaiting revised documents that would allow her to file her taxes properly.

“I don’t want this hanging over my head,” Yearby said in an interview. “I tried to resolve this issue. I tried to give them the necessary tools in order for them to resolve it.”

A spokeswoman for Florida’s unemployment agency declined to provide details on a specific case. But she said last month that the state is communicating with Yearby and otherwise has stopped \$23 billion in fraudulent unemployment claims.

ID.me is now under a separate investigation on Capitol Hill, where federal lawmakers in April [demanded](#) the company turn over detailed records about its contracts with state and federal agencies, including the IRS. Congressional Democrats raised “serious concerns” about the accuracy of the firm’s facial recognition technology, arguing that the mistakes nationwide threaten to deny much-needed financial support to Americans in greatest need.



Blake Hall, the chief executive of [ID.me](#), responded more broadly, pointing out the “underfunded” nature of unemployment agencies across the country.

“As a result, they entered into a perfect storm — facing historic demand and fraud — woefully unprepared to provide the needed levels of access and security,” he said in a statement.

**‘The federal government has not kept up’**

In the meantime, the U.S. government faces another daunting task — trying to recover what it has lost. In early May, a 45-year old man from Lekki, Nigeria, [pleaded guilty](#) to using stolen identities to obtain hundreds of thousands of dollars in pandemic benefits, including a massive, 18-state scheme that siphoned more than \$350,000 from Washington state. He admitted he had engaged in similar fraud targeting the government for years, dating back to 2017, when he targeted relief programs for hurricane victims.

In late March, in Boston, a 30-year-old man [pleaded guilty](#) to stealing identities to obtain about \$150,000 unemployment benefits in Massachusetts and other states. The man filed some of the applications from the same computer, according to the unsealed complaint, eventually drawing investigators’ interest.

And a federal court in February sentenced a former employee at California’s own unemployment agency to five years in prison, after she was convicted of stealing \$4.3 million in benefits. She filed the flurry of claims using Social Security numbers [culled from her past work](#) as a tax preparer, prosecutors said.

Despite the recent array of cases, the work to bring these fraudsters to justice hasn’t always been easy. Behind the scenes, a battle raged at the end of the Trump administration into the first year of Biden’s term over access to the very data that might have helped the federal government catch more criminals sooner.

The trouble stemmed from a dispute between the Labor Department and its own watchdog. Essentially, the Labor Department had erected barriers making it hard for states to turn over troves of information about unemployment claims so that federal officials, including the inspector general, could review the data for fraud. That forced the inspector general to seek separate subpoenas in all 54 states and territories every time it had hoped to query local records, delaying its work considerably, according to three people familiar with the matter, who requested anonymity to describe the dispute.

The dispute saddled not only the inspector general but also the Justice Department, which relies on the watchdog for criminal leads, according to an agency official who requested anonymity to describe the private discussions. By last June, the stalemate bubbled to the surface, prompting Carolyn R. Hantz, the assistant inspector general for audit, to [issue a stark warning](#).

“Billions of dollars in potentially fraudulent claims are at risk of not being detected and improper payments stopped at the earliest opportunity,” she said at the time.

Ultimately, the White House intervened: Sperling, who oversees stimulus spending, helped secure access to the data and conditioned some future federal funding on its continued availability. That opened the door for federal officials to augment their efforts to scan unemployment claims for fraud, the sources said.

The Biden administration has since trained its sights on upgrading the country’s unemployment system — improving the technology that allows states to verify claims in the first place. Tech teams overseen by Evermore, a top official at the Labor Department, have plugged into states including Arizona, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Washington and Virginia, backed by a \$2 billion initiative.

The White House also has explored a potential new executive order that aims to improve the government’s ability to combat identity theft and protect federal funds from misuse. The president commissioned a task force to review the issue last year amid a wave of reports about pandemic-related fraud in unemployment and other programs, said Sperling, adding the administration had “taken steps to address the harm to those who have already been victims.”

	<p>The scramble in Washington may be too late for those Americans who scrounged for aid while criminals feasted on generous federal benefits. But lawmakers, labor advocates, tech experts and law enforcement officials agreed that the government still needs to act swiftly, and aggressively, to stem the tide of a fraud that has left few untouched in its wake.</p> <p>“The ability to engage in identity theft has grown exponentially and the federal government has not kept up,” warned Michael Horowitz, the inspector general for the Justice Department and leader of the Pandemic Response Accountability Committee, which coordinates oversight of the country’s more than \$5 trillion in spending.</p> <p>Horowitz said the unfortunate reality is that Americans “don’t realize sometimes” the real victim of such immense fraud targeting the government in the first place: “It’s the individual.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/14 Racist idea ‘replacement theory’</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/14/nyregion/buffalo-shooting#in-buffalo-and-some-other-mass-shootings-a-shared-belief-that-white-people-could-be-wiped-away">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/14/nyregion/buffalo-shooting#in-buffalo-and-some-other-mass-shootings-a-shared-belief-that-white-people-could-be-wiped-away</a>
GIST	<p>Through the 180 pages of hate-filled writings that Payton S. Gendron posted online, a common theme emerged: The notion that white Americans are at risk of being replaced by people of color.</p> <p>Gunmen have referenced the racist idea, known as <a href="#">“replacement theory,”</a> during a string of mass shootings and other violence in recent years. It was once associated with the far-right fringe, but has become increasingly mainstream, pushed by politicians and <a href="#">popular television programs</a>.</p> <p>And it has repeatedly been the motivation for attacks across the United States and beyond, from the <a href="#">Poway, Ca. synagogue shooting in 2019</a> to the killing of 51 worshipers at two mosques in <a href="#">Christchurch, New Zealand</a>, the same year.</p> <p>The racist theory was directly referenced in a four-page screed written by the man charged with killing more than 20 people in El Paso, which described an attack in response to “the Hispanic invasion of Texas” and outlined fears about the group gaining power in the United States.</p> <p>One year earlier, when 11 people were killed at Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, the accused gunman had espoused similar racist views, referring to the people helped by a Jewish agency <a href="#">that aids refugees as “invaders.”</a></p> <p><a href="#">The theory was conceived in the early 2010s by Renaud Camus</a>, a French author who has written about fears of a white genocide, arguing that immigrants who give birth to more children represent a threat to white people.</p> <p>Mr. Camus has attempted to distance himself from violent white supremacists, decrying killings even as his ideas have been referenced in more attacks. But he told The New York Times in 2019 that <a href="#">he still stands by the notion</a>.</p> <p>The idea that white people should fear being replaced by “others” has spread through far-right online platforms, shaping discussions among American white nationalists, The Times has reported.</p> <p>It has also been evident across some acts of violence. About 60 percent of the extremist murders committed in the United States between 2009 and 2019 were committed by people espousing white supremacist ideologies like the replacement theory, <a href="#">the Anti-Defamation League found</a>.</p> <p>“It is the most mass-violence-inspiring idea in white supremacist circles right now,” said Heidi Beirich, co-founder of the Global Project Against Hate and Extremism. “This particular idea has superseded almost everything else in white supremacist circles to become the unifying idea across borders.”</p>

Experts have said the belief represents a shift in the conversations of white supremacists. Several decades ago, they often proclaimed that they were superior because of their race. While that continues today, many now focus on the idea that they fear extinction at the hands of people of color. At a [racist rally in Charlottesville, Va. in 2017](#), marchers chanted, “Jews will not replace us.”

Mr. Gendron, an 18-year-old white man, espoused similar views in the manifesto, directly referencing “racial replacement” and “white genocide.” The first page contained a symbol known as the sonnenrad, or black sun — two concentric circles with jagged beams emanating from the center. The [Anti-Defamation League has said it was commonly used in Nazi Germany](#), and has now been adopted by white supremacists and neo-Nazis.

Mr. Gendron praised nationalism and blamed European men for allowing themselves to get “ethnically replaced.” He lamented diversity in America, writing that people of color should “leave while you still can.” And he criticized progressives, saying they had succeeded only at “teaching white children to hate themselves.”

Ms. Beirich, who reviewed the manifesto on Saturday, said it seemed to contain a “hodgepodge of every crazy white supremacist idea.”

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HEADLINE	<b>05/14 Live-streamed ‘racially motivated’ shooting</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.vice.com/en/article/xgdnx4/buffalo-shooting-10-dead-racially-motivated-attack">https://www.vice.com/en/article/xgdnx4/buffalo-shooting-10-dead-racially-motivated-attack</a>
GIST	<p>At least 10 people were killed in a mass shooting in a Buffalo, New York grocery store Saturday in an attack that authorities called racially motivated.</p> <p>The suspect, who was dressed in military-style tactical gear and a helmet, has been arrested, officials said.</p> <p>The suspect is an 18-year-old white male and a total of 13 people were shot, including three with non-life threatening injuries, Buffalo Police Commissioner Joseph Gramaglia told reporters on Saturday. The shooting took place at a grocery store located in a predominantly black neighborhood, and 11 of the victims are black.</p> <p>“This was pure evil,” Erie County sheriff John Garcia told a press conference Saturday. “It was straight up racially motivated hate crime from somebody outside of our community.”</p> <p>The mass shooting has garnered the attention of the FBI.</p> <p>“The FBI is assisting in this investigation and has no other information to provide at this time,” a spokesperson for the bureau told VICE News.</p> <p>The gunman live-streamed the attack, Gramaglia said, and fragments of video clips that had apparently been live-streamed on Twitch appeared on social media after the event.</p> <p>The suspect drove from a location hours away to the Tops Friendly Supermarket and initially shot four people in the parking lot, Gramaglia said, killing three, with one victim who initially survived their wounds from the attack.</p> <p>He then entered the supermarket and began “engaging customers inside the store,” Gramaglia said. A former Buffalo police department officer working as a security officer in the store shot the suspect, but the bullet was absorbed by his heavily-plated armor, and the suspect shot and killed the security guard, Gramaglia said.</p> <p>The suspect also allegedly wrote a manifesto which has been circulating online and was obtained by VICE News.</p>

	<p>Opening the nearly two-hundred page document is an image of a sonnenrad or sunwheel: known popularly as the “Black Sun” it was a symbol of the Third Reich later popularized by <a href="#">neo-Nazi terror groups</a>, the Christchurch shooter, and is now a shorthand signifier for violent white nationalism in online far-right circles.</p> <p>The screed makes persistent reference to a perceived “white genocide” and rails against a surge of illegal immigration in the U.S., and nods to a global conspiracy holding that a cabal of Jewish businessmen run world governments. The gunman makes clear that he was inspired by the terrorist who gunned down fifty people at a mosque in New Zealand in 2019, who was himself inspired by other white nationalist terrorists from Canada and Norway.</p> <p>“The manifesto is interesting for several reasons,” said Amarnath Amarasingam an assistant professor of religion at Queen’s University in Canada and a far-right terrorism expert. “For one, it is dripping with Great Replacement conspiracy theories, about a coming demographic collapse of white Europeans.”</p> <p>“It copies the Christchurch shooter's question and answer style as well as the Halle synagogue shooter's style of providing in depth instructions on how to plan another attack.”</p> <p>Amarasingam, who along with another source familiar with the neo-Nazi underground confirmed the authenticity of the manifesto, said the most troubling aspect of it was that it shows “these attackers are learning from each other and attempting to emulate each others' killing sprees. It's deeply worrisome.”</p> <p>“It’s like walking onto a horror movie, but everything is real. It is Armageddon-like,” a police officer at the scene told <a href="#">The Buffalo News</a>. “It is so overwhelming.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/14 Shooter linked to online hatred</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thedailybeast.com/tops-massacre-suspect-payton-gendron-may-have-spewed-hate-online?ref=home">https://www.thedailybeast.com/tops-massacre-suspect-payton-gendron-may-have-spewed-hate-online?ref=home</a>
GIST	<p>The New York teenager accused of killing 10 people at a Buffalo supermarket on Saturday afternoon in a “straight-up racially motivated hate crime” appears to have spent months before the attack spewing racist conspiracy theories on social media sites.</p> <p>Law enforcement officials have named the alleged gunman as <a href="#">18-year-old Payton Gendron</a>, of Conklin, New York. They also confirmed that Gendron livestreamed some of the attack.</p> <p>Footage from the livestream, posted on the video platform Twitch, shows a man decked out in military garb filming from a helmet-mounted camera before exiting the car with a rifle, on which he appears to have painted racist slurs.</p> <p>A spokesperson for Twitch confirmed to The Daily Beast that the shooting was broadcast live on the platform by a person with the username “jimboboiiii.” They said they were “vigorously monitoring” to shut down any re-streams of the horrifying footage.</p> <p>A person using the same social media handle as Gendron’s Twitch account shared racist and antisemitic comments on Reddit and Discord in the months before the attack.</p> <p>In addition, a hate-filled document that surfaced online soon after the assault was written under the name Payton Gendron and contained a vow to target Buffalo because of its large Black population. He wrote that he would specifically target Black people, both inside and outside the Tops store, which was mentioned by name and location.</p> <p>That document also described plans to murder an armed security guard on duty and included a crude sketch of the store and where the author expected the guard to stand inside. It anticipated a gun fight, and described how the author planned to absorb shots with body armor.</p>

The manifesto also pays tribute to the gunman in the Christchurch, New Zealand, shootings, who killed 51 people at two mosques—referring to the 2019 mass shooter as “the person that radicalized [me] the most.” The writer specifically lauds the earlier gunman’s obsession with the “Great Replacement” conspiracy theory, a racist fantasy about a supposed plot to eliminate white people.

The shooter thus appears to have followed in the footsteps of notorious white supremacist gunmen like those in the 2019 massacres in El Paso, Texas; Poway, California; and the 2018 attack on a Pittsburgh synagogue.

The document also included some biographical details, noting that the author lived with his two brothers and parents. A neighbor of the Gendron family told The Daily Beast the 18-year-old has two brothers.

Law enforcement sources have told The Daily Beast that they are investigating a possible manifesto, but the document could not be authenticated in the hours after the massacre. It’s not clear if the version that was circulating online could have been altered by someone.

A person using the username “Jimbo Boiii” also posted a review online for a pawn shop near Gendron’s hometown, which is a three-hour drive from Buffalo. The shop advertises its purchase and sale of coins, a theme in both the Reddit account and the purported manifesto. The writer of the latter described accruing gold and silver pieces as a way to spite national governments that print paper money, and the Jewish people he imagined control them.

A user going by the name “Jimboboiiii” also sought advice online about body armor and ammunition that could defeat it, [according to nonprofit media collective Unicorn Riot](#). Two years ago, he posted a query on Discord asking how many “non penetrative bullets like 9×19 rounds will it take to go through something like level 4 ceramic body armor?” and, “Would a 30-06 M2 Alternative be better at penetrating armor than a regular M2 Ball? [...] I mean M2 alternative i bought some at a gun store the other day.”

In the aftermath of Saturday’s shooting, New York Gov. Kathy Hochul called out social media for enabling the gunman to spread his views.

“The social media platforms that profit from their existence need to be responsible for monitoring... They can in a sense become an accomplice, if not legally but morally,” she told reporters.

At an evening press conference, Buffalo officials said there was no known contact between law enforcement and Gendron and that they had no warning of the attack.

Gendron was previously enrolled at SUNY Broome Community College but it was not immediately clear how long he studied there. A spokeswoman for the school, in comments to [The Buffalo News](#), described him as a “former student.”

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HEADLINE	05/15 Tragic tale of an Alabama jailbreak, death
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/15/vicky-white-alabama-jail-escape-plot">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/15/vicky-white-alabama-jail-escape-plot</a>
GIST	<p>Maybe it was because she had endured the loss of two longtime partners over the last several years. Or perhaps she feared – if she didn’t go through with it – her loved ones would be killed.</p> <p>Whatever the case, James Ballentine hopes there’s a good explanation for why his neighbor of nearly 40 years, Vicky White, ignited a romantic affair with an inmate of the rural Alabama jail where she was the assistant director, and helped him escape, before she shot herself to death as police closed in 11 days later and about 300 miles away. It was a story that captured national and global attention.</p>

“That’s just not Vicky to do something like that, because of the way she was,” said Ballentine, who grew up across the street from the home White shared with her parents in Lexington, Alabama. “She wasn’t raised that way.”

Yet, as police continue investigating how White became entangled in what they called one of the best-planned jailbreaks they had seen, authorities say the evidence is clear. Vicky White wasn’t coerced into the plot – she willingly participated.

“You think you know someone,” said the Lauderdale county sheriff, Rick Singleton, whose office runs the jail that employed White. “And it turns out you really don’t know them at all.”

The confusion is easy to understand when White, 56, is viewed from the perspective of those in her home town.

Ballentine saw a devoted daughter, who spent most of her life residing either in her parents’ house or in a home directly behind it. She would help her father pour concrete, which is how he made his living. She would get her parents groceries, clean their house, drive them to the doctor, and take care of repairs around the place.

Ballentine, 58, said he trusted her so much that she babysat his son, now 26, alone on several occasions, beginning when he was about six. He ran out of gasoline one time and out of all the people in the world, he called her for help. She promptly showed up and brought him to a gas station, where he filled up a can before she drove him back to the empty vehicle.

“You could rely on her for anything,” Ballentine said. “Anything.”

Another neighbor, Jody King, said White would delight his children with her patrol cruiser, waving as she made its lights flash and sirens blare on her way in to work at the Lauderdale correctional center.

“She was just extremely nice,” King said.

Maybe the only other place where White enjoyed such a spotless reputation was at the lockup where she worked for 16 years.

White earned supervisor of the year honors at the facility four times, and she was in line for a fifth such award later this month. That illustrated how highly both White’s colleagues and even the inmates they oversaw regarded her, according to Singleton.

“She was the kind of employee everyone wanted – if something needed to be done, she was the go-to person,” said Singleton, who has been in office seven years. “If there was something you needed, she made sure she got it for you.”

But White’s wasn’t a pain-free life. In December 2009, a car crash killed her years-long romantic companion, 49-year-old Bryan Garner. Then, this past January, complications from Parkinson’s disease killed her ex-husband Tommy White, 62, with whom she stayed on good terms.

Did the heartbreak from both deaths leave her vulnerable to striking up an ill-advised romance? Authorities know they may never get the answer. But many of White’s acquaintances can’t help but wonder now, especially given what happened after she met Casey Cole White (no relation).

By the time Vicky White’s path crossed with that of Casey White, he was already serving a 75-year sentence at a prison in Jefferson county, Alabama, after being convicted of breaking into an ex-girlfriend’s home in 2015, shooting at her and two of her friends, and killing her dog.

He had also shot at police after fleeing in a stolen car and trying to carjack another vehicle, firing at both drivers in the process.



Then, in 2020, he allegedly sent a letter to the Lauderdale county sheriff's office confessing that he had broken into the apartment of Connie Ridgeway and stabbed the 58-year-old mother of two to death in 2015, before his imprisonment.

The missive prompted Alabama officials to transfer Casey White to the lockup that Vicky White helped run. Authorities have kept mostly mum about precise details, but Singleton has said that sometime after that, Vicky White began showing Casey White preferential treatment, such as by giving him extra food.

Casey White, now 38, initially pleaded guilty to the Ridgeway slaying, but then he changed his plea to not guilty, arguing that he was legally insane and therefore not culpable at the time of the killing.

Amid the procedural rigamarole, Casey White was transferred out of the Lauderdale county lockup, but then he returned in February of this year, in advance of preliminary hearings centering on his trial in the Ridgeway murder, which was scheduled to get under way in June.

Singleton said Vicky White – in the interim – stayed in touch with Casey White, who could possibly be executed if convicted of murdering Ridgeway. The sheriff wouldn't elaborate, but he said investigators have since secured recordings of telephone calls that Vicky White made to Casey White when he was temporarily transferred out, and they establish that the two had linked up romantically.

As the end of April neared, Vicky White suddenly started talking about moving to the beach and quitting the job from which she never took sick days or vacation time. She briefly moved in with her parents nextdoor after selling her home on 18 April for \$95,550 – far below the \$235,600 that the Lauderdale county government estimated her property was worth. And she initiated the process to retire from the sheriff's office, scheduling her last ever shift for 29 April.

One of Vicky White's last moves on the job was to send a total of 12 inmates and five deputies under her command to court in two transport vans. It left her as the last employee at the correctional center who was authorized to transport inmates, Singleton said.

Vicky White took advantage of her suddenly solitary position, put Casey White in her patrol cruiser, and told her remaining colleagues that she was taking the imposing 6ft 9in detainee to a mental health evaluation at court.

Only officials later realized there was no such evaluation scheduled, and neither Vicky nor Casey White ever made it to court. And if anyone knew that traveling alone with an inmate was against jail policy, it was Vicky White, Singleton said.

The sheriff experienced a wide range of emotions as the hours passed and there was no sign of the Whites. At first he feared Casey White had somehow overpowered his trusted jail aide and forced her to help him escape.

But, relatively quickly, it became clear those fears were unfounded. Authorities spotted Vicky White's patrol cruiser abandoned at a nearby shopping center. Surveillance then showed them getting into and driving off in a 2007 Ford Edge sport-utility vehicle that Vicky White had just bought under an assumed identity, apparently with the money she made from offloading her home. Casey White even had a change of clothes on hand.

As word spread of the inmate and jail guard who apparently ran off together, other detainees at the lockup came forward and told investigators that the Whites had been engaging in a romantic relationship. Investigators in part used the recordings of the calls that Vicky White made to Casey White to confirm that information as true, Singleton said.

Within hours of their disappearance, Singleton's deputies had obtained a warrant to arrest both Vicky White and Casey White, launching a huge manhunt that drew assistance from the US Marshals Service, the nation's elite fugitive catchers.

Vicky White's mother, Patricia "Pat" Davis, went on a local television station and pleaded with her daughter to come home, describing her shock to viewers. She had never heard of Casey White, and her last conversation with her daughter was a mundane one about her dog, the mother recounted.

"I thought at first it was a mistake," Pat Davis told WAAY-TV. "And then when I found out for sure it was [not], it was just disbelief."

Despite her mother's supplications, Vicky White didn't come home. She and Casey White ditched the Edge in a community in Tennessee about two hours north of Lauderdale county and left in a Ford F-150 pickup that her money also apparently bought. By 4 May, they ditched the truck at a car wash in Evansville, Indiana, about 270 miles from Lauderdale.

Investigators used car wash surveillance video to determine that they had gotten into a Cadillac, a third getaway vehicle which Vicky White's money had seemingly purchased.

At this point, the US marshal in charge of the manhunt, Marty Keely, said it became obvious the Whites' escape plot was unusually well planned.

"Typically with escapes, they have a plan to get over the fence, but once they're on the outside, they're not very organized," Keely said. Crediting it to Vicky White's intimate knowledge of jail operations, Keely said: "This was much more organized than you typically see."

Officers canvassed Evansville for signs of the Cadillac, finally seeing it at a local motel. They staked out the motel and spotted Casey and Vicky White emerging from the room where they were apparently trying to lie low.

The pair got into the Cadillac and took off when police tried to stop them.

A 15-minute car chase ensued. It ended with an officer ramming the Cadillac into a ditch, where it turned on to its side.

The crash activated equipment in the car that automatically alerted 911 to the wreck. Emergency dispatchers listened in on – and recorded – a panicked Vicky White speaking to Casey White.

"Oh my God ... Casey," Vicky White says on the recording. "Airbags are going off. Let's get out and run. Get us back to the fucking hotel! ... Casey."

Soon after, Vicky White aimed a gun at her head and shot herself.

The recording picked up the voices of officers approaching the wrecked car after Vicky White had turned her gun on herself.

"She's got a gun in her hand, and she's breathing," one of the voices said. "Her finger is on the trigger."

There were handguns, a rifle, ammunition magazines and \$29,000 in cash, but Casey White didn't try to run any more. He surrendered, asking officers to help his "wife", who had shot herself in the head.

There's no evidence that the Whites ever married, but officials said the remark starkly illustrated how close the two had become.

	<p>Officers arrested Casey White and brought Vicky White to the hospital, where she was pronounced dead. Officials said an autopsy examination performed on Tuesday confirmed she died by her own hand, despite speculation from some that Casey White had possibly killed her and then tried to lie.</p> <p>Casey White has since been returned to Alabama for the Ridgeway murder trial and to face charges in connection with his near two-week escape.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Vicky White's family held her funeral Saturday in Lauderdale county. About 200 mourners – colleagues, friends and loved ones – gathered at a local cemetery to pay their final respects.</p> <p>Vicky White's mother and father, JC Davis, went back to their home after the burial. The dad stood in his garden and briefly spoke with the Guardian, saying the size of the turnout for the funeral was a small comfort, showing how much their community respected his daughter.</p> <p>He declined to say much more as his wife waved him back into the home. "We'll let it go with how it's been going," he added, clad in an undershirt and jeans. "I couldn't believe what happened at all. I'll tell you that."</p> <p>Minutes later, lifelong Lexington resident Amy Crunk dropped by Vicky White's gravesite, adorned with an array of fresh flowers. Crunk said she stopped by because her late brother was best friends with Vicky's brother, and JC had poured concrete jobs for her and much of the rest of her family.</p> <p>"If somebody dropped a bomb (here), I don't think it would be as big a shock as this," Crunk said. "Because they're such a good family, everyone wants to find a reason. We're trying to figure out why she did what she did. She made a mistake. Yes, she did wrong. But everyone is sad for her family and what they're going through."</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>05/14 Seattle concert: 12 break-ins, 1 parking lot</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/12-break-ins-1-parking-lot-after-concert-seattle/QS7IMW76EFF4DGZ6QYXTT3VPIE/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/12-break-ins-1-parking-lot-after-concert-seattle/QS7IMW76EFF4DGZ6QYXTT3VPIE/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>SEATTLE — Concertgoers coming back from a Friday night show at WaMu Theater in Seattle were stunned to find at least a dozen of their cars had been broken into.</p> <p>Cory Sokol of Seattle was among the break-in victims. According to Sokol, he parked his car in a lot right across from Lumen Field at around 8:30 p.m. He did not get back to his car until 11 p.m. or so.</p> <p>"It's just frustrating to have parked for a concert for three hours and then to have everything gone through like that," said Sokol. "My trunk was gone through. A couple people said their house keys got stolen."</p> <p>Sokol says nothing was stolen from inside his car, but he estimates he'll have to pay \$200 to \$300 to repair the window that was busted in.</p> <p>"It had to have been multiple people to have gone through this parking lot that quickly," said Sokol. "It was definitely organized. I don't know if they watch show or game schedules or something like that."</p> <p>What surprised him was despite all the foot traffic in the area, food vendors and law enforcement, nobody seemed to notice what happened.</p> <p>"This is the second time my car has been broken into. I moved here in February," said Sokol. "It's definitely a problem."</p> <p>KIRO 7 contacted Seattle Police and Diamond Parking, which owns the lot, for more information.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/14 White supremacist racist manifesto
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/14/nyregion/buffalo-shooting#the-accused-gunmans-racist-manifesto-outlined-a-plan-to-kill-blacks-and-referred-to-replacement-theory">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/14/nyregion/buffalo-shooting#the-accused-gunmans-racist-manifesto-outlined-a-plan-to-kill-blacks-and-referred-to-replacement-theory</a>
GIST	<p>Payton S. Gendron, an 18-year-old white man who the police say shot 13 people at a Buffalo grocery store, had posted a hate-filled manifesto online that included an account of detailed planning for the attack and an explanation of his motives and inspiration, according to a senior federal law enforcement official.</p> <p>The mass shooting was the latest massacre driven by a <a href="#">white supremacist ideology</a>, following similar acts of violence in recent years from El Paso, Tex., to Christchurch, New Zealand. At a news conference on Saturday, the Erie County sheriff, John C. Garcia, called the shooting a “straight-up racially motivated hate crime.”</p> <p>It unfolded in a largely Black neighborhood in Buffalo, and 11 of the people shot were Black, officials said. Mr. Gendron wrote in his manifesto that he had selected the area because it held the largest percentage of Black residents near his home in the state’s Southern Tier.</p> <p>On Saturday evening, authorities pored over the document, which outlined each step of a plan to kill as many Black people as possible.</p> <p>He named the Bushmaster semiautomatic assault rifle he would use. He constructed a full timeline of the day, detailing the parking spot he would drive to, where he would eat beforehand and where he would livestream the violence. And he had carefully studied the layout of the grocery store, writing that he would shoot a security guard near the entrance before walking through aisles and firing upon Black shoppers, shooting them twice in the chest when he could.</p> <p>His writings were also riddled with racist, anti-immigrant views arguing that white Americans are at risk of being replaced by people of color, a common trope on the far-right known as the <a href="#">“great replacement” theory</a>. The same ideas have motivated gunmen in several other mass shootings.</p> <p>Mr. Gendron wrote that he was inspired by the perpetrators of other white supremacist acts of violence, naming <a href="#">Dylann Roof</a>, who killed nine Black parishioners in South Carolina in 2015, among other gunmen.</p> <p>His plan for the shooting in Buffalo resembled the 2019 massacre at a Walmart in El Paso, Tex., in which more than 20 people died and the gunman had also posted a four-page screed filled with white supremacist views.</p> <p>He said that he felt a particular connection to <a href="#">Brenton Harrison Tarrant</a> — calling him the person “who had radicalized him the most.” Mr. Tarrant was sentenced to life without parole for killing 51 Muslims during Friday prayer at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. Mr. Gendron said that he had watched Mr. Tarrant’s livestream of the attack and read his writings.</p> <p>Buffalo officials said that Mr. Gendron had “traveled hours from outside” the neighborhood to unleash gunfire at unsuspecting shoppers at an outlet of the regional grocery chain Tops Friendly Markets. He lived in the Southern Tier with his parents and two brothers, according to the manifesto.</p> <p>A spokeswoman at SUNY Broome Community College near Binghamton added that he was a former student whose dates of attendance were not immediately known.</p> <p>Mr. Gendron’s writings depicted a man who grew to hold racist views in recent years as he visited fringe online spaces. His beliefs and ideology had moved farther right over the past three years, he wrote.</p> <p>Around May 2020, during a period of pandemic boredom, Mr. Gendron said that he had begun to frequent 4chan, an anonymous forum, including its Politically Incorrect message board. There, he said, he was exposed to the conspiracy theory that white people are at risk of being replaced.</p>

	He had been “passively preparing” for the attack in Buffalo for several years, purchasing ammunition and gear, while infrequently practicing shooting, he wrote. Around January, he wrote, the plans “actually got serious.”
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HEADLINE	<b>05/14 Buffalo grocery story mass shooting</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/14/nyregion/buffalo-shooting">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/14/nyregion/buffalo-shooting</a>
GIST	<p>BUFFALO — A teenage gunman entranced by a white supremacist ideology known as replacement theory opened fire at a supermarket in Buffalo on Saturday, methodically shooting and killing 10 people and injuring three more, almost all of them Black, in one of the deadliest racist massacres in recent American history.</p> <p>The authorities identified the gunman as 18-year-old Payton S. Gendron of Conklin, a small town in New York’s rural Southern Tier. Mr. Gendron drove more than 200 miles to mount his attack, which he also livestreamed, the police said, a chilling video feed that appeared designed to promote his sinister agenda.</p> <p>Shortly after Mr. Gendron was captured, a manifesto believed to have been posted online by the gunman emerged, riddled with racist, anti-immigrant views that claimed white Americans were at risk of being replaced by people of color. In the video that appeared to have been captured by the camera affixed to his helmet, an anti-Black racial slur can be seen on the barrel of his weapon.</p> <p>The attack, at a Tops Friendly Market in a largely Black neighborhood in east Buffalo, conjured grim comparisons to a series of other massacres motivated by racism, including the killing of nine Black parishioners at a church in Charleston, S.C., in 2015; an antisemitic rampage in a Pittsburgh synagogue in 2018 that left 11 people dead; and an attack at a Walmart in El Paso in 2019, where the man charged had expressed hatred of Latinos. More than 20 people died there.</p> <p>In the Buffalo grocery store, where four employees were shot, the savagery and planning were evident: Mr. Gendron was armed with an assault weapon and wore body armor, the police said. And his preferred victims seemed clear as well: All told, 11 of the people shot were Black and two were white, the authorities said.</p> <p>“It was a straight up racially motivated hate crime,” John Garcia, the Erie County sheriff, said.</p> <p>In a news conference Saturday evening, Gov. Kathy Hochul — a Buffalo native — echoed that sentiment and decried the attack as an “act of barbarism” and an “execution of innocent human beings,” as well as a frightening reminder of the dangers of “white supremacist terrorism.”</p> <p>“It strikes us in our very hearts to know that there is such evil that lurks out there,” Governor Hochul said. Based on what was written in the manifesto, the attack appeared to have been inspired by earlier massacres that were motivated by racial hatred, including a mosque shooting in New Zealand and the Walmart shooting in Texas, both in 2019.</p> <p>In the manifesto, which was being reviewed by law enforcement, Mr. Gendron — who had attended a community college in Binghamton, N.Y. — wrote that he had selected the area because it held the largest percentage of Black residents near his home in the state’s Southern Tier, a predominately white region that borders Pennsylvania.</p> <p>The document outlined a careful plan to kill as many Black people as possible, complete with the type of gun he would use, a timeline, and where he would eat beforehand.</p> <p>It also included details of where he would livestream the violence, mayhem that he had also calibrated. He carefully studied the layout of the grocery, writing that he would shoot a security guard before stalking through aisles and firing upon Black shoppers. He wrote that he would shoot some twice, in the chest, when he could.</p>

He wrote he had been “passively preparing” for the Buffalo attack for several years, purchasing ammunition and gear, while infrequently practicing shooting. In January, the plans “actually got serious,” according to the manifesto, which also expressed praise for the perpetrator of the 2015 attack in South Carolina, and for [a man who killed 51 Muslims](#) at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, in 2019.

Mr. Gendron had read the racist writings of the New Zealand gunman, who had also livestreamed his attack, a method also used in a [shooting](#) at a Jewish synagogue in Halle, Germany, in 2019.

In an arraignment on Saturday evening, Mr. Gendron pleaded not guilty to first-degree murder, a charge that could lead to life imprisonment without parole. He spoke little except to confirm he understood the charges, and gave little indication of emotion inside the courtroom.

The United States attorney in Buffalo, Trini E. Ross, said her office was also investigating the killings as federal hate crimes.

Other gunmen have referenced the racist idea known as [“replacement theory,”](#) a concept once associated with the far-right fringe, but one that has become increasingly mainstream, pushed by politicians and [popular television programs](#).

Officials said the camera that the gunman wore was used to broadcast the attack live on Twitch, a livestreaming site owned by Amazon that is popular with gamers. On Saturday, Twitch said it had taken the channel offline. Still, screenshots of the broadcast were circulating online, including some that appeared to show the shooter holding a gun and standing over a body in the grocery store.

In his manifesto, Mr. Gendron seemed enthusiastic about broadcasting his attack, saying the livestream let “all people with the internet” watch and record the violence.

The massacre began around 2:30 p.m., the authorities said, when Mr. Gendron arrived at the market stepping out of his car — on a sunny spring afternoon — dressed in tactical gear and body armor and carrying an assault weapon.

He shot four people in the parking lot, the Buffalo police commissioner, Joseph A. Gramaglia, said at the news conference, three of them fatally. When he entered the store and continued shooting, he encountered a security guard, a retired Buffalo police officer who returned fire. But Mr. Gendron was wearing heavy metal plating; he killed the guard and continued into the store, firing on shoppers and employees.

When Buffalo police officers arrived and confronted Mr. Gendron, he put a gun to his neck, but two patrolmen persuaded him to drop his weapon and surrender, Mr. Gramaglia said.

The mayor of Buffalo, Byron W. Brown, said that he and his family periodically shopped at the store.

“Some of the victims of this shooter’s attack are people that all of us standing up here know,” said Mr. Brown, the fifth-term Democrat who was the first Black man elected mayor of Buffalo, New York’s second-most populous city.

The 10 people killed in Buffalo represent the highest number of fatalities in a mass shooting in the United States this year, according to the [Gun Violence Archive](#), which tracks them. The highest death toll this year before that was six, in a shooting in [downtown Sacramento](#) on April 3. Six people were also killed in a shooting in Corsicana, Texas, on Feb. 5, and the same number were killed in a shooting in Milwaukee on Jan. 23, according to the site.

In a statement made late Saturday night, President Biden expressed sympathy for the victims’ families and praise for law enforcement, adding that “a racially motivated hate crime is abhorrent to the very fabric of this nation.”



“Any act of domestic terrorism, including an act perpetrated in the name of a repugnant white nationalist ideology, is antithetical to everything we stand for in America,” the president said. “Hate must have no safe harbor.”

Gun deaths reached the highest number ever recorded in the United States in 2020, the first year of the pandemic, surging by 35 percent, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported on Tuesday.

The gunfire in Buffalo on Saturday shattered a seemingly serene afternoon, sending shoppers screaming and fleeing inside the Tops, and families scrambling to find loved ones outside the store.

Ken Stephens, 68, a member of a local anti-violence group, described a grisly scene. “I came up here, and bodies were everywhere,” he said.

The attack took place in a neighborhood known as Masten Park on Buffalo’s East Side. Dominique Calhoun, who lives within sight of the supermarket, said she was pulling into its parking lot to buy ice cream with her daughters — eight and nine years old — when she saw people running out and screaming. “That literally could have been me,” she said of the people who were killed.

Dorothy Simmons, 64, typically spends part of her Saturdays at Tops, shopping for food to prepare for Sunday dinner, something she says is part of a common tradition in her community. On Saturday, however, she was at work in Amherst.

And when she heard the news, she broke down and cried.

“This is our store,” Ms. Simmons said. “This is our store.”

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HEADLINE	05/14 Milwaukee curfew; 21 injured in shootings
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/05/14/Milwaukee-shootings/2051652536506/">https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/05/14/Milwaukee-shootings/2051652536506/</a>
GIST	<p>May 14 (UPI) -- Milwaukee Mayor Cavalier Johnson implemented a curfew Saturday after a series of overnight shootings left 21 people injured downtown.</p> <p>The curfew will be in place 11 p.m. Saturday to 5:30 a.m. for anyone under the age of 21, the <a href="#">Milwaukee Journal Sentinel</a> reported. The curfew area encompasses parts of downtown known as the Deer District.</p> <p>Violators of the curfew will be fined \$691.</p> <p>The neighborhood was the site of three shootings that took place Friday night after the Milwaukee Bucks' playoff game loss to the Boston Celtics. The Deer District is home to the arena where the Bucks play -- Fiserv Forum.</p> <p>One shooting at 11 p.m. injured 17 people blocks from Fiserv Forum, the <a href="#">Milwaukee Journal Sentinel</a> reported. The victims' ages ranged from 15 to 47.</p> <p>Police said they arrested 10 people and covered nine guns.</p> <p>An earlier shooting at around 9 p.m. left another three people injured, including a 16-year-old girl. Police said they arrested three men in connection with that shooting.</p> <p>Another shooting took place around 10:30 p.m. that injured a single person. Police said they weren't sure if the shootings were connected.</p> <p>A witness who saw one of the shootings Friday said the violence makes him worried about the safety of Game 7 of the playoff series on Sunday.</p>

	<p>"It's putting some fear into me right now," he told <a href="#">TMJ-TV</a> in Milwaukee.</p> <p>Thousands of basketball fans had gathered outside the Fiserv Forum in the city's Deer District to celebrate the game in what the Journal Sentinel described as "almost a festival-like atmosphere." The gunfire, however, sent people running.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/14 Car thefts on rise; owners frustrated</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/car-thefts-are-rise-region/Q2ZDHOZZ55CKZFVO4O5O25X7BE/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/car-thefts-are-rise-region/Q2ZDHOZZ55CKZFVO4O5O25X7BE/</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Matt Knudsen started off the year without a car.</p> <p>“The first week of January, it’s stolen. And it’s a bummer. But I get by,” says Knudsen.</p> <p>But like most stolen cars in Seattle, his car was recovered.</p> <p>“Everybody at work was like, ‘Dude, your car got stolen. It’s gonna be so much money. Don’t let them impound it’.”</p> <p>But he was too late. The car he originally paid \$1300 for was impounded. He then paid more than \$300 to get it back.</p> <p>A few months later, his car was stolen again. Again, it was recovered.</p> <p>He says while it wasn’t impounded, it wasn’t driveable. It’s currently sitting in a police vehicle lot. He says officers with Federal Way Police told him the car was involved in a crime after it was stolen.</p> <p>Knudsen says despite officers making arrests in that case, they won’t disclose the name of the suspect.</p> <p>Knudsen wants the name so he can sue for damages. He says the only way he can get his car from the police lot is by paying to have it towed and then fixed.</p> <p>Felicidad Labontaine is also frustrated after her family’s car was stolen in Seattle. She says despite numerous calls to police, no officer ever followed up. She says she was never given a case number.</p> <p>“They wouldn’t even take our case. They just throw us to the curb,” says Labontaine.</p> <p>She believes she knows who stole the car, yet she says the police still haven’t moved forward with her case. Now she’s started getting toll fees from that car, dated after it was stolen.</p> <p>Both stories come as car thefts are on the rise in Washington. <a href="#">An annual report shows that 2021</a> had more than 31,000 car thefts.</p> <p>In Seattle, there have been 2,075 vehicle thefts already this year. On its website, Seattle police reported that approximately 86% of stolen cars are recovered.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>05/13 SPD: 2 arrests for 60 smash-grab burglaries</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/police-arrest-2-suspects-accused-of-nearly-60-smash-and-grab-burglaries-in-seattle-area">https://www.q13fox.com/news/police-arrest-2-suspects-accused-of-nearly-60-smash-and-grab-burglaries-in-seattle-area</a>
GIST	<p><b>SEATTLE</b> - Two suspects, who police believe are responsible for nearly 60 smash-and-grab ATM burglaries, were arrested Friday, according to <a href="#">The Seattle Police Department (SPD)</a>.</p> <p>The SPD General Investigations Unit and <a href="#">Bellevue</a> detectives say they believe the 30 and 33-year-old suspects have smashed their way into upwards of 60 businesses in the <a href="#">Seattle</a> area in the last year. Both</p>

men are currently booked into the [King County](#) Jail for burglary, theft, malicious mischief and possession of a stolen vehicle.

Authorities say members of [SPD's SWAT, Major Crimes Taskforce and Gun Violence Reduction Unit](#) served two warrants at a [Tukwila](#) motel on Friday morning, arrested the suspects and impounded two vehicles.

Detectives say the suspects have stolen hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash, and caused tens of thousands of dollars' worth of damage to the businesses in the process.

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